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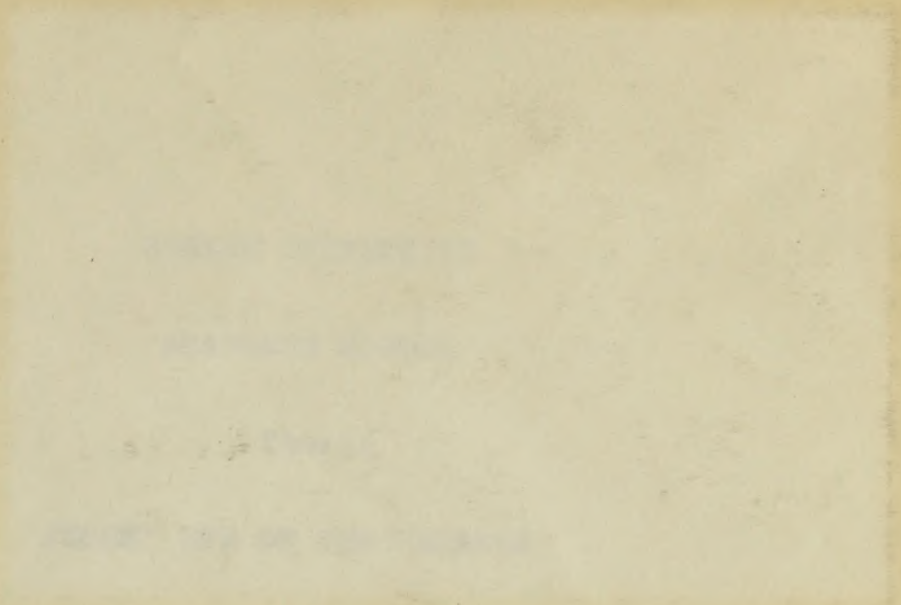
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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

JESUS' USE OF THE PARABLE

Submitted by

Arthur Reed Hoverland

(S.B., Mount Union, 1922)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for

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1930

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C. Compare Gospel records.

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(1). Jesus was surprised when misunderstood.

(2). His enemies did not understand him.

(3). Why also did he rejoice that the people

did not understand him?

(4). Many of his parables are so simple that

anyone can understand them.

(5). If he didn't want to be understood, why

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6. Did he want to reveal his teaching?

7. Did he want to stimulate inquiry?

8. Did he want to test the character of his hearers?

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(2). No trace of a subtle meaning in his detailed explanations.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY SURVEY OF JESUS' PARABLES

In his teaching ministry Jesus made constant use of the parable to illustrate the spiritual truths that he wanted his hearers to grasp. There are only twenty-eight of the sixty-eight chapters in the Synoptic Gospels in which no parables are recorded. The Gospel of Luke, which contains more parables than the other Gospels, has only seven chapters in which no parables are found.

The Gospels may be said to be made up of three kinds of materials. First, there is the narrative material, describing Jesus' life and associated events. Second, there is what is known as the discourse material, or Jesus' direct teaching. Third, there are the illustrative sayings of Jesus, consisting mostly of parables.

Since there seems to be such a widespread disagreement as to what is a parable and what is not, it will be well to make a survey of the Synoptic Gospels to determine as far as it is possible how many parables there are.

Many of the writers upon the subject of the parables of Jesus do not pretend to give a complete list. The usual practice is to select a dozen or so of the parables that have become favorites with the writer and interpret them in one-two-three order. Sometimes there is a short introduction, but in many instances there is nothing more than a brief preface.

Other writers, however, such as Trench, Goebel, Levison,

INTRODUCTION

In his recent study of the Gospels, the author has been struck by the fact that the Gospels are not only different in their content, but also in their style. The Gospel of Luke, which contains the most detailed account of the life of Jesus, is often regarded as the most reliable. The Gospel of Matthew, which is the most widely known, is often regarded as the most popular. The Gospel of Mark, which is the shortest, is often regarded as the most primitive. The Gospel of John, which is the most theological, is often regarded as the most recent.

The Gospels may be said to be made up of three kinds of material. First, there is the primitive material, which is the earliest and most reliable. Second, there is the material which is derived from the primitive material, but which has been modified or added to. Third, there is the material which is derived from the primitive material, but which has been modified or added to in a way which is not reliable.

Since there seems to be such a widespread agreement as to what is a parable and what is not, it will be well to make a survey of the Synoptic Gospels to determine as far as possible how many parables there are.

Many of the writers upon the subject of the parables of Jesus do not hesitate to give a complete list. The usual list is to select a dozen or so of the parables that are found in the Gospels and to give a brief description of each. This is a very good way of doing it, but it is not always clear what the writer's purpose is. Sometimes there is a mere list of parables, but sometimes there is a selection of parables which are thought to be particularly important.

Stirling, Bruce, Hubbard, Buttrick, and Robinson, give a more complete list of the parables. Trench lists thirty parables in his "Notes on the Parables of Our Lord". Most of the books that have been written in English accept this list as standard. Goebel includes but twenty-seven parables in his list. Bruce has thirty-three, and eight germ-parables, making forty-one in all. Hubbard's list totals thirty-nine and Buttrick's forty-four. H.G.Wood, in the Abingdon Bible Commentary, gives a total of forty-eight, four of which are from the Gospel of John. Horne suggests the possibility of about sixty-five parables. Robinson gives a list of fifty-seven.

The reason for this difference of opinion will be considered in another chapter of this study. It will be more practical now to get a list of the parables before us. It is impossible to place the parables in chronological order. The fact that they are scattered over three gospels precludes the possibility of any such arrangement. Even if we had parables in but one gospel, there is much evidence to show that they are not placed in chronological order. The parables in this list, therefore, are for convenience tabulated in the order in which they appear through the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. The names applied to these parables are for identification purposes only, and have nothing to do with the point of the parable, except that in most cases the two coincide.

1. Salt (Matt. 5:13; Mark 9:49; Luke 14:34f.). Found listed as a parable by Robinson and Horne only.

2. Lamp on lampstand (Matt. 5:14a, 15, 16; Mark 4:21;

Luke 8:16; 11:33). Found listed by Robinson, Wood, and Horne only.

3. City set on a hill (Matt. 5:14b). Listed by Robinson and Horne only.

4. Single eye (Matt. 6:22f.; Luke 11:34-36). Robinson and Horne.

5. Serving two masters (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13). Robinson and Horne.

6. Son asking from father (Matt. 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13). Robinson and Horne.

7. Tree and fruits (Matt. 7:16-20; 12:33-37; Luke 6:43-46). Robinson and Horne.

8. House on the rock (Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49). This is the first parable in St. Matthew that is generally recognised, although it is not included in Trench's list. It is included in the lists made by Horne, Wood, Bruce, Luccock, Hubbard, Buttrick, and Robinson.

9. Physician and the sick (Matt. 9:12f.; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31f.). Listed by Bruce, Horne, and Robinson.

10. Sons of the bridechamber (Matt. 9:14; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35). Robinson, Buttrick, Bruce, and Horne.

11. Patches and new wine (Matt. 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36). Robinson takes this passage as one parable. Buttrick, Hubbard, Bruce, Horne, and Wood treat them as separate parables. Levison has a chapter on the new wine in the old wineskins, but ignores the patch on the old garment. Hubbard also separates Luke 5:39 and treats it as a parable by itself, calling it "Self-Satisfied Conservatism", or

only.
3. Only nest on a hill (date, 5:14). Listed by Robinson.
and Horne only.
4. Single egg (date, 5:20; Lake 11:30-35). Robinson
and Horne.
5. Serving two masters (date, 5:24; Lake 12:15).
Robinson and Horne.
6. Don asking from father (date, 7:2-7; Lake 1:11-12).
Robinson and Horne.
7. Two and three (date, 7:10-20; Lake 1:13-14).
Robinson and Horne.
8. House on the rock (date, 7:24-27; Lake 6:47-50).
This is the first passage in St. Matthew that is generally
recognized, although it is not included in French's list.
It is included in the lists of Horne, Good, Brown,
Luscomb, Hubbard, Butterick, and Robinson.
9. Thysanites and the alk (date, 9:12; Lake 2:17; Lake
5:31). Listed by Brown, Horne, and Robinson.
10. Bone of the hyacinth (date, 9:16; Lake 2:18-20;
Lake 5:32-35). Robinson, Butterick, Brown, and Horne.
11. Father and son (date, 9:16; Lake 2:21;
Lake 5:36). Robinson takes this passage as two passages.
Butterick, Hubbard, Brown, Horne, and Good treat them as
separate passages. Lusk has a chapter on the two and the
the old wilderness, but also the father on the old garment.
Hubbard also separates Lake 5:37 and treats it as a passage
by itself, calling it "Gold-dusted conversation."

"The Reveler". Thus, Hubbard would make this section three parables instead of one or two.

12. Disciple and master (Matt. 10:24f.; Luke 6:40).
Robinson and Horne.

13. Revealing of concealed (Matt. 10:26f.; Mark 4:22f.; Luke 8:17; 12:2f.). Robinson and Horne.

14. Children playing (Matt. 11:16-19; Luke 7:31-35).
Buttrick, Bruce, Robinson and Horne.

15. Beelzebub questions (Matt. 12:22-30; 12:43-45; Mark 3:23; Luke 11:14-26). Horne, Robinson, and Wood list this section as one parable. Levison has a chapter on the first part of this passage, entitled "The House Divided". Buttrick and Hubbard call the second part a separate parable with the designation "The Empty House".

16. The sower (Matt. 13:3f.; Mark 4:2f.; Luke 8:4f.).
The scholars seem to agree that this is a parable. It occurs in nearly all lists.

17. Tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:24f.). This parable is included in all lists that are meant to be complete.

18. Mustard seed (Matt. 13:31f.; Mark 4:30f.; Luke 13:18f.). Found in all complete lists.

19. Leaven (Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20f.). All are agreed that this is a parable.

20. Hid treasure (Matt. 13:44). All are agreed that this is a parable.

21. Pearl (Matt. 13:45-46). All are agreed that this is a parable.

"The Reveal", Time, Edward would take this section three

parties instead of one or two.

12. Heston and master (West, 10:25; Lake 6:40).

Hobson and Hone.

13. Festival of candles (West, 10:25; Lake 6:40).

Lake 6:17; 10:25; Hobson and Hone.

14. Children playing (West, 11:10-12; Lake 7:31-32).

Hobson, Bruce, Robinson and Hone.

15. Reel and dances (West, 12:00-10; 13:45-46).

West 5:27; Lake 11:14-15; Hone, Robinson, and West 11:15.

This section as one parable. Layman has a chapter on the

first part of this passage, entitled "The House Divided".

Hobson and Hobson call the second part a separate parable

with the designation "The Empty House".

16. The tower (West, 13:37; Lake 4:27; Lake 5:41).

The writers seem to agree that this is a parable. It occurs

in nearly all lists.

17. Taxes among the Jews (West, 13:28; Lake 13:28).

is included in all lists that are meant to be complete.

18. Mustard seed (West, 13:31; Lake 4:30; Lake

13:18). Found in all complete lists.

19. Leaven (West, 13:33; Lake 13:21). All are agreed

that this is a parable.

20. The measure (West, 13:44). All are agreed that

this is a parable.

21. Pearl (West, 13:45-46). All are agreed that this is

a parable.

22. Fish-net (Matt. 13:47-50). All are agreed that this is a parable.

23. Householder bringing forth treasures old and new (Matt. 13:52). Hubbard, Buttrick and Robinson include this among the parables. It is commonly assumed that there are seven parables in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew. If this is included in the list, there will be eight.

24. Blind leading the blind (Matt. 15:14; Luke 6:39). Robinson and Horne only.

25. Real defilement (Matt. 15:15; Mark 7:17). Found in Levison, Robinson and Horne.

26. Children's bread given to the dogs (Matt. 15:26f.; Mark 7:27f.). Robinson and Horne only.

27. Lost sheep (Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:3). All are agreed that this is a parable.

28. Unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:23-35). All are agreed that this is a parable.

29. Laborers in vineyard, or the parable of the hours (Matt. 20:1-16). Trench omits this from his list. Included in lists by Robinson, Buttrick, Hubbard, Levison, Bruce and Goebel.

30. Two brothers (Matt. 21:28-32). Not in Goebel's list. Otherwise this parable is generally included.

31. Wicked husbandmen (Matt. 21:33-45; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19). All include this except Levison. They keep this narrative in the list of parables, although it might be considered as an allegory. Buttrick and Bruce consider the

22. Wolf-boy (Matt. 13:47-50). All are agreed that this

is a parable.

23. Hunchbacked man (Matt. 13:44-46). This parable is old and new (Matt. 13:44). Hunchback, Buttrick and Robinson include this among the parables. It is commonly assumed that there are seven parables in the thirteenth chapter of Matt. Hutton. If this is included in the list, there will be eight.

24. Blind leading the blind (Matt. 18:14; Luke 9:40).

Robinson and Horne only.

25. Seed sowing (Matt. 13:18; Mark 4:17). Found in

Leverson, Robinson and Horne.

26. Children's bread given to the dogs (Matt. 15:26).

Mark 7:27. Robinson and Horne only.

27. Lost sheep (Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:3). All are

agreed that this is a parable.

28. Unprofitful servant (Matt. 18:23-25). All are

agreed that this is a parable.

29. Lamp on a stand, or the parable of the house (Matt. 24:1-14). Hutton omits this from his list. Included in lists by Robinson, Buttrick, Hutton, Leverson, Bruce and Gosbel.

30. Two brothers (Matt. 21:28-32). Not in Gosbel's list.

Otherwise this parable is generally included.

31. Wicked husbandmen (Matt. 21:33-45; Mark 12:1-12).

Luke 20:9-19. All include this except Leverson. They have this narrative in the list of parables, although it might be considered as an allegory. Buttrick and Bruce consider the

latter part of this passage, the "corner stone" section, as a separate parable.

32. Marriage feast of the king's son (Matt. 22:1f.; Luke 14:15-24). All include this in the list of parables. However, Buttrick, Bruce, Trench and Goebel do not believe that the Matthew and Luke accounts are variants of the same parable, but that they are distinct parables. It is certain that they are quite different in detail. Buttrick and Bruce also consider Matt. 22:11-14 as a separate parable with the title "The Wedding Robe". Thus, according to Buttrick and Bruce there is one parable in Matthew 22:1-10; another in Matthew 22:11-14; and yet another in Luke 14:15-24.

33. Carcass and eagles (Matt. 24:28; Luke 17:37). Robinson and Horne only.

34. Fig tree as harbinger (Matt. 24:32; Mark 13:28; Luke 21:29). It is significant that there are only four parables that are so called by all three of the Synoptic writers. This is one of them. Yet the only lists in which this parable was found to be included were by Robinson, Wood and Horne. Most of the scholars who have written books on the parables of Jesus have not intended to give a complete list of the parables. But it would seem that those who have done so, such as Buttrick, Hubbard, Bruce, Goebel and Trench, do not agree with the synoptists that this is a parable.

35. Thief (Matt. 24:43f.; Luke 12:35-40). This parable is so much a part of the one that follows that Hubbard and Mitchell count them as one. Bruce labels this "The good man

latter part of the passage, the "utterance" section,
as a separate parable.

32. Marriage Feast of the King's Son (Matt. 22:1-14)

(Luke 14:15-24). All include this in the list of parables.

However, Buttrick, Bruce, Trench and others do not believe
that the wedding and other accounts are variants of the same
parable, but that they are distinct parables. It is certain
that they are quite different in detail. Buttrick and Bruce
also consider Matt. 22:11-14 as a separate parable with the
title "The Wedding Feast". Then, according to Trench and
Bruce there is one parable in Matt. 22:1-14; another in
Matthew 22:11-14; and yet another in Luke 14:15-24.

33. Carcase and Garlic (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:37)

Robertson and Horne only.

34. The Tree as Judge (Matt. 21:18-19; Luke 13:6-9)

(Luke 21:29). It is significant that there are only four

parables that are so called by all three of the Synoptic

writers. This is one of three. Yet the only list in which

this parable was found to be included was by Robertson.

Wood and Horne. Most of the scholars who have written books

on the parables of Jesus have not intended to give a complete

list of the parables. But it would seem that those who have

done so, such as Buttrick, Hubbard, Bruce, Gobel and

Trench, do not agree with the Synoptists that this is a

parable.

35. Talents (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27). This parable

is so much a part of the one that follows that Hubbard and

Mitchell count them as one. Bruce labels this "The Good and

and the thief", and includes it among his list of parable-germs. Robinson lists this as a separate parable. Other scholars do not include this section at all.

36. The watching servant (or servants) (Matt. 24:45-51; Mark 13:34; Luke 12:42-46). Robinson gives this as a separate parable. Bruce includes it in his list of parable-germs, but he separates the reference in Mark 13:34 as a distinct "parable-germ" because it refers distinctly to the "porter" as the one who is to watch. Wood and Horne list the "watching servant" as a parable. Really there are five elements present in these passages: the master of the house (Matt. 24:43); the thief (Matt. 24:43); the faithful and wise servant (Matt. 24:45); the porter (Mark 13:34); and the evil servant (Matt. 24:48). But it cannot be said that there are five parables here.

37. The ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). Robinson is unique in identifying Luke 13:23-30 with this parable. All who attempt complete lists include Matt. 25:1-13.

38. Talents (Matt. 25:14-30). Robinson considers this parable and that of the Pounds (Luke 19:11-27) as variants of the same one. All others seem to separate them.

39. Last judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). Buttrick, Luccock, Wood and Horne include this as a parable.

40. The child in the midst (Matt. 18:1-3). This is unique in that it is an acted parable. This parable is not usually included in the lists. Dr. W.J. Lowstuter points out this parable in his lectures on "The Teachings of Jesus".

and the chief", and included it among his list of parables.
 Robinson lists this as a separate parable. Other
 scholars do not include this section at all.
 36. The watching servant (Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:34-37; Luke 12:42-48). Robinson gives this as a separate parable. Bruce includes it in his list of parables, but he separates the reference in Mark 13:34 as a distinct "parable-germ" because it refers distinctly to the "porter" as the one who is to watch. Wood and Horne list the "watching servant" as a parable. Really there are five elements present in these passages: the master of the house (Matt. 24:42); the chief (Matt. 24:43); the faithful and wise servant (Matt. 24:44); the porter (Mark 13:34); and the evil servant (Matt. 24:48). But it cannot be said that there are five parables here.
 37. The ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). Robinson is unique in identifying Luke 13:23-30 with this parable. All who attempt complete lists include Matt. 25:1-13.
 38. Talents (Matt. 25:14-30). Robinson considers this parable and that of the Pounds (Luke 19:11-27) as variations of the same one. All others seem to separate them.
 39. Last Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). Eusebius, Jerome, Wood and Horne include this as a parable.
 40. The child in the mill (Matt. 18:1-5). This is unique in that it is an acted parable. This parable is not usually included in the lists. Dr. W. L. Llewellyn points out this parable in his lectures on "The Resurrection of Jesus".

41. True freedom (Matt. 17:24-27). Levison includes this in his list of the parables. It is on the order of an acted parable. Robinson declares expressly that this is not a parable (1).

This completes the list of parables that are to be found in the Gospel of St. Matthew. In the Gospel of St. Mark there is only one parable that is not found in any other gospel. It is the parable of spontaneous growth that comes next in our list.

42. Spontaneous growth (Mark 4:26-29). Included in all complete lists except that of Hubbard.

43. Men awaiting their Lord (Mark 13:33-37; Luke 12:36-38). Listed by Robinson, Wood and Horne. Note that this is from the passage from which the parables that we have numbered 35 and 36 are also taken. The distinction is that this idea of the men who await their lord does not occur in the Matthean account.

This concludes the parables in St. Mark's Gospel.

44. "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4:23). Although this is expressly called a parable by St. Luke, only Robinson and Horne refer to it as a parable. Can a proverb be a parable? This question will be considered in a later chapter.

45. The two debtors (Luke 7:40-43). In all complete lists but that of Goebel.

46. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Included in all complete lists of the parables.

47. The importunate friend (Luke 11:5-8). Included in all complete lists of the parables.

(1). Robinson, W.H. - Parables of Jesus, p. 139.

41. The Tenth (Matt. 13:54-58). Matthew includes this in his list of the parables. It is on the order of an acted parable. Matthew's footnote at the end of the parable (13:58).

This completes the list of parables that are to be found in the Gospel of St. Matthew. In the Gospel of St. Mark there is only one parable that is not found in any other Gospel. It is the parable of the fig tree which grows next to our list.

42. Spontaneous growth (Mark 4:26-29). Included in all complete lists except that of Hobart.

43. Men awaiting their Lord (Matt. 13:35-43; Luke 12:35-40). Listed by Robinson, Wood and Horne. Note that this is from the passage from which the parables that we have numbered 35 and 36 are taken. The distinction is that this idea of the men who await their Lord does not occur in the Matthew account.

This concludes the parables in St. Mark's Gospel.

44. "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4:23). Although this is expressly called a parable by St. Luke, only Robinson and Horne refer to it as a parable. Can it properly be called a parable? This question will be considered in a later chapter.

45. The two debtors (Luke 7:36-40). In all complete lists but that of Goshel.

46. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35). Included in all complete lists of the parables.

47. The Importunate Friend (Luke 11:5-8). Included in all complete lists of the parables.

48. The rich fool (Luke 12:16f.). Bruce only omits this parable.

49. Knowing and unknowing disobedience (Luke 12:47f.). Robinson and Wood. This is from the same passage as the parables that we have numbered 35, 36, and 43 in this list.

50. The unfruitful fig tree (Luke 13:6). Included in all complete lists of the parables.

51. Order of guests at supper (Luke 14:7f.). Robinson, Levison, Buttrick and Bruce include this as a parable.

52. Building a tower (Luke 14:28-30). Robinson, Buttrick and Hubbard only, list this one.

53. The warring king (Luke 14:31-33). Listed by Robinson, Buttrick and Hubbard only.

54. The lost coin (Luke 15:8-10). Included in all complete lists of the parables.

55. The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Included in all complete lists of the parables. There are very few books on the parables that do not have a chapter dealing this one. Buttrick considers the teaching concerning the elder brother to be in the form of a separate parable.

56. The unjust steward (Luke 16:1-12). Included in all complete lists of the parables.

57. The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Included in all complete lists of the parables.

58. The bondservant, or extra service (Luke 17:7-10). Included in all complete lists of the parables.

59. The unrighteous judge (Luke 18:1-8). Included in all complete lists of the parables.

43. The right foot (Lake 15:10-11). This is a copy of the

original.

44. Knowing and understanding (Lake 15:12-13). This is a copy of the

original.

45. The right foot (Lake 15:14-15). This is a copy of the

original.

46. The right foot (Lake 15:16-17). This is a copy of the

original.

47. The right foot (Lake 15:18-19). This is a copy of the

original.

48. The right foot (Lake 15:20-21). This is a copy of the

original.

49. The right foot (Lake 15:22-23). This is a copy of the

original.

50. The right foot (Lake 15:24-25). This is a copy of the

original.

51. The right foot (Lake 15:26-27). This is a copy of the

original.

52. The right foot (Lake 15:28-29). This is a copy of the

original.

53. The right foot (Lake 15:30-31). This is a copy of the

original.

54. The right foot (Lake 15:32-33). This is a copy of the

original.

55. The right foot (Lake 15:34-35). This is a copy of the

original.

56. The right foot (Lake 15:36-37). This is a copy of the

original.

60. The Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14).

Included in all complete lists of the parables.

61. The pounds (Luke 19:11-27). Included in all complete lists of the parables. Robinson combines this with the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30).

It can easily be seen that this is not a perfect list of the parables. The first seven are not usually considered as parables at all. The relation of the parable to other figures of speech will be dealt with in a later chapter. We may find then that some of the parables listed here will have to be removed because they are not essentially parables. But it is better to err on the side of inclusiveness, rather than to exclude from the list certain passages that may not agree with all definitions of the parable. The illustration of the Last Judgment is a case in point here. This does not seem to be a parable, in the strict sense of the term. Yet it is appropriately considered only among the parables.

Other difficulties in listing the parables are bound to occur because of the differing accounts of the separate synoptic gospels. The synoptists probably never meant to give a full and accurate account of the parables as Jesus uttered them. Doubtless many of Jesus' parables have been lost to us. Others have changed in form, while yet preserving the central idea, or, as it has sometimes been called, "the luminous center".

A little study of the gospel records will show that the Evangelists did not intend to give a carefully worked out list of the parables. This may be noted from their use

50. The Parables and the Kingdom (Luke 13:18-21).

Included in all complete lists of the parables.

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It can easily be seen that this is not a perfect list

of the parables. The first seven are not usually numbered

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features of the Gospel will be dealt with in a later chapter. It

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than to exclude from the list certain passages that may not

agree with all definitions of the parable. The illustration

of the last Testament is a case in point here. This does not

seem to be a parable, in the strict sense of the term. But it

is a parable in the popular sense, and is included.

Other illustrations in the Gospel are those

to which because of the nature of the accounts of the parables

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A little study of the Gospel records will show that

the Evangelists did not intend to give a carefully worked

out list of the parables. This may be noted from the

of the term. Robinson gives a chart, showing the use of the word "parable" in the gospels. He finds that Mark uses the word thirteen times, Matthew seventeen times, and Luke eighteen times. Yet Mark applies the term to only six parables, Matthew to eight, and Luke to fourteen. Only three of the parables are expressly named "parable" by all three synoptists. They are: the sower, the wicked husbandmen, and the fig tree as harbinger. Three others are recorded by all the synoptists, but not named "parable" by all of them. Thus the parable of the mustard seed is called a parable by Matthew and Mark, but not by Luke. When Mark comes to the Beelzebub questions he says, "And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan?'" Matthew and Luke record this same controversy, but make no mention of the word "parable". Again, in connection with the patches and the new wine, Luke says, "And he spake also a parable unto them". Matthew and Mark record the same thing but do not mention the word "parable". Matthew and Mark allude to the passage on "real defilement" as a parable (Matt. 15:15; Mark 7:17). The following thirteen passages are also called parables by one of the gospels: Tares (Matt. 13:24f.); Leaven (Matt. 13:33-34) (This is recorded in Luke, but not called a parable); the Unwilling guests (Matt. 22:1. Recorded in Luke, but not called a parable.); "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4:23); Blind leading the blind (Luke 6:39. Recorded in Matthew, but not called a parable.); the rich fool (Luke 12:16); The thief (Luke 12:41. Recorded in

Matthew, but not named a parable.); Unfruitful fig tree (Luke 13:6); Order of guests at supper (Luke 14:7); Lost sheep (Luke 15:3. Recorded also by Matthew, but not named a parable.); Unrighteous judge (Luke 18:1); Pharisee and publican (Luke 18:9); Pounds (Luke 19:11).

The fact that these passages are called parables by one gospel and not by another shows that the synoptic writers did not intend that only the passages they named parables should be considered such. There are many other omissions of a nature similar to the above. For instance, Luke does not call the story of the prodigal son a parable. The same is true of Matthew's story of the talents.

From this conclusion we might proceed in one of two directions. If we want to reduce the number of parables to the absolute minimum, we can say that we will ignore the gospel nomenclature. We could then proceed to determine our list of parables by the strict definition of a parable. This is the method employed by Goebel. He says that the expression "Physician, heal thyself" is a proverb and not a parable, even though it is called a parable in Luke. Nor according to Goebel, is the passage about the wine and the patches a parable; nor the blind leading the blind; nor the house divided against itself; nor the fig tree as harbinger; nor the question of real defilement. If these are parables, says Goebel, we can also find at least fourteen parables in the Sermon on the Mount.

Goebel objects to the extensive list of parables that would result from this method. "Accordingly", he says, "we

have..... to limit our matter by distinguishing the parables in the stricter sense, known by this name in the phraseology of the Church, from the parables in the wider sense, corresponding to the Biblical use of the word parable..... There must be a definite distinguishing element constituting the idea of the parable in the stricter sense. The correct view is as follows: It is the distinction obvious to the eye, between the figurative language occasionally interwoven and the figurative history expressly imagined, which is the cause of the latter only being called the parables of Jesus by pre-eminence. Accordingly, the character of a complete figurative history or narrative is to be regarded as merely an allusion to some fact belonging to the sphere of physical or human life, or to some relation obtaining there, but the invention and narration of a connected series of particular events, combined into a single whole, serves here as a pictorial representation of doctrine belonging to the religious sphere" (1).

Goebel goes on to say that there are examples of parables that are universally called so in Church usage yet have not the narrative form. Examples are the two parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. But both, "although merely clothed in the form of a question referring to an imagined case, give in the contents of the parabolic question the matter for a narrative so definite in detail and complete

(1). Goebel, Siegfried - The Parables of Jesus, p. 3.

in itself, that the absence of the narrative-form is lost to the consciousness of the hearer and reader" (1).

Robinson (2) bases his list of the parables on an assumption quite opposite to that of Goebel. He accepts as a parable anything that is called "parable" by any one of the gospels. Then he selects his other parables upon the basis of parallelism. Since two or three gospels contain the same parable but only one of them records it as a parable, it is to be inferred that the gospels do not mean to be specific in pointing out the parables to the reader. For instance, if Luke fails to call a parable a passage that is called a parable by Matthew, it is also likely that Luke will fail to call by name of parable other passages that are not to be found in Matthew at all. It is on this basis that Robinson proceeds. He says that "many passages which are not named parables are built upon precisely the same lines as certain others which are so designated" (3). "The sayings about the lamp on the lampstand, the city set on a hill, the salt without savor, the single eye, the tree and its fruits, the sons of the bridechamber while the bridegroom is with them, and the physician and the sick, are built upon the same general lines as the saying about putting the new piece into the old garment, although only the last is called a parable. For in each of them something that everybody or nobody does in the sensuous or concrete world is

(1). Ibid. p. 3.

(2). Robinson, W.H. - The Parables of Jesus, p. 4.

(3). Ibid. p. 4.

made parallel to what people ought to do or ought not to do in a similar relation in the ethical and spiritual world" (1).

Robinson would not agree with Goebel's implication that it is impossible to make a list of the parables on the basis of comparison. Robinson does not include in his list of parables things that could not have literally taken place, if we except the passage about the unclean spirit wandering in desert places (Matt. 12:43-45). In regard to the limitation of the number of the parables Robinson says: "While the parable field includes nothing but comparisons, we do not include in our list instances of single words used figuratively, but only those passages where the comparison is expressly made or intended as such. Jesus, of course, sometimes used words in a figurative sense. These, however, we notice, are never termed parables, for in them the element of comparison, while more or less obscurely present, is not expressly indicated. Lists of parables which include straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel (Matt. 23:24), the wolf in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15), the man with a millstone about his neck cast into the sea (Luke 17:2), and the easy yoke and light burden (Matt. 11:29) go too far. In the first instance cited, for example, the words "swallowing" and "camel" cannot be taken literally. It is a figurative use of words. So also in the last example Jesus offered no wooden yoke, and it was impossible to "take" one from him. On the other hand, casting children's bread to dogs is a possible

(1). Ibid. p. 5.

and literal act which Jesus used to illustrate a spiritual lesson" (1).

The only records that we have of the parables are found in the synoptic gospels. There are passages in John such as the "bread of life" (John 6:32-58), the "good shepherd" (John 10:1-16), the "vine and the branches" (15:1-6), that are sometimes considered as parables (2), but it is generally conceded that these are clearly allegories. There are many other brief similes in this gospel that cannot be called parables.

In the synoptic gospels we find quite a difference between the parables in St. Matthew and in St. Luke. The Gospel of Mark contains but one real distinctive parable that is not found in one or both of the other synoptic gospels. But this cannot be said of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Bruce classifies the parables as theoretic, evangelic, and prophetic. The distinct parables in Matthew, he says, are theoretic and prophetic. The distinct parables in Luke are almost entirely evangelic. Luke paints Jesus as a friend to sinners. To buttress his argument Bruce quotes Renan as follows: "There is hardly an anecdote, a parable peculiar to Luke, which breathes not the spirit of mercy and of appeal to sinners. The only word of Jesus a little hard which has been preserved, becomes with him an apologue full of indulgence and patience. The unfruitful tree must not be cut down too quickly. The good gardener opposes himself to the anger

(1). Ibid. p. 8.

(2). Mitchell, Parables of the New Testament.

Wood, Parables of Jesus, in Abingdon Bible Commentary.

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evangelic and moralistic. Luke again found as a reason for
this. To further his argument Bruce quotes the following
passage: "There is hardly an anecdote, a parable peculiar
to Luke, which presents not the spirit of mercy and of appeal
to sinners. The only word of Jesus a little hard which has
been preserved, because with it an evangelist felt of Jewish
genos and pharisees. The universal free will not be lost
too quickly. The good physician opposed himself to the scribes

(1). Ibid. p. 8.

(2). Widdowell, Parables of the New Testament.

Good, Parables of Jesus, in Abington Bible Commentary.

of the proprietor, and demands that the tree be manured before it be finally condemned. The Gospel of Luke is by excellence the gospel of pardon, and of pardon obtained by faith" (1). It is true that we do find much of this emphasis in Luke's Gospel. He pictures Jesus as the Saviour of the world. He is writing, it must be remembered, to Gentile readers. It is the most natural thing in the world that he should emphasize the universal character of God's love.

The Gospel of Matthew, as Trench points out, "was originally written for Jewish readers, and mainly for the Jews of Palestine; its leading purpose being to show that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, the expected King of the Jews - the Son of David - the Son of Abraham; - that in him the prophecies of the Old Testament found their fulfilment" (2). Matthew may be called theocratic in his emphasis. Probably the central theme is the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, it has been pointed out by Stirling that this was the central idea of all the parables (3). Goebel goes still farther and remarks that the kingdom of heaven lay at the center of all Jesus' teaching. It is in Matthew that we get most of the emphasis on Jesus as Messiah. It is interesting to compare the parable of the royal marriage feast (Matt. 22:1f.) with that of the unwilling guests (Luke 14:15-24). The kingly element is entirely lacking in Luke's Gospel.

(1). Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, (quoting Renan) p. 5

(2). Trench, *Parables of Our Lord*, p. 30.

(3). Stirling, *Christ's Vision of the Kingdom of Heaven*.

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 Luke's Gospel.

- (1). Bruce, The Parabolic Teaching of Christ, (London: Bampton, 1917).
- (2). French, Matthew at Antioch, p. 30.
- (3). Alford, Christ's Vision of the Kingdom of Heaven.

CHAPTER II

CLASSIFICATION OF THE PARABLES

Robinson is convinced that "there is no system whatever inherent in the parables" (1). Arnot is also of the opinion that the parables cannot be classified. Yet he goes on to say: "Any one may observe, as he reads our Lord's parables, that some of them are chiefly occupied with the teaching of doctrine, and others with the reproof of prevailing sins" (2). If this distinction were carried out to its logical conclusion, it would result in a very rigid sort of classification. This might be all right if everybody agreed with it. But there seems to be a difference of opinion in regard to many of the parables as to whether Jesus is teaching doctrine or reproofing certain kinds of living.

Where classifications are attempted the usual practice is to lump together the first seven parables in Matt. 13, add a few others to them, and call them the parables of the early ministry of Jesus. These are usually called doctrinal or teaching parables. The parables that are distinctly Lucan are put into another division. They may be called evangelic parables, parables of free grace, of mercy and salvation, reproof of sin, or parables of human relationship. The third division includes most of the parables of Matthew after the

(1). Robinson, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 125.

(2). Arnot, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 26.

CHAPTER II

CLASSIFICATION OF THE PARABLES

Robinson is convinced that "there is no greater weakness inherent in the parables" (1). At first it is clear that the parables cannot be classified. But he goes on to say: "Any one may observe, as he reads our Lord's parables, that some of them are chiefly occupied with the teaching of doctrine, and others with the report of revelation" (2). If this distinction were carried out to its logical conclusion, it would result in a very rigid sort of classification. This might be all right if everybody agreed with it. But there seems to be a difference of opinion in regard to many of the parables as to whether Jesus is teaching doctrine or revealing certain kinds of living.

These classifications are attempted in the usual manner in the last chapter. The first seven parables in Matt. 13, and a few others to them, are called the parables of the kingdom of Jesus. These are usually called the kingdom parables. The parables that are chiefly about teaching doctrine, the parables of the kingdom of the future, are put into another division. They are the parables of the kingdom of the future, or parables of the kingdom of the future. The parables of the kingdom of the future, or parables of the kingdom of the future, are put into another division. They are the parables of the kingdom of the future, or parables of the kingdom of the future.

(1). Robinson, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 125.

(2). *Ibid.*, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 26.

thirteenth chapter, also Luke's parable of the Pounds, and the one of the Great feast. These are called the parables of Jesus' later ministry, or doctrinal, or judgment and separation, prophetic or judicial, eschatological, symbolic, parables of the passion week, the parables of the completion of the kingdom, or simply miscellaneous parables. Wherever there is any attempt at classification, there will be seen this general arrangement.

Even where there is an attempt to follow the chronological order, we find the arrangement to be along these lines. Buttrick is most enthusiastic for the chronological arrangement. He says: "The chronological order, if it could be determined, would perhaps be the best. It would show the unfolding of the spirit of Jesus; for Jesus was within our human category of growth" (1). He then says that his arrangement "is an attempt, undoubtedly vulnerable, to arrange the parables in approximate natural sequence" (2). In the effort to follow Jesus' thought life, Buttrick divides his list of parables into the early ministry (the parables of the kingdom) and the later ministry. The parables of the later ministry, which make up the much larger group, are divided into two sections. The first section includes the parables which deal with people's relationship to each other, or the conditions and marks of discipleship. The second section includes the parables of Passion Week, the parables of Judgment. Thus

(1). Buttrick, The Parables of Jesus, p. xxvii.

(2). Ibid., p. xxviii.

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we have in this arrangement: the parables of the early ministry (mainly Matthew 13); the distinctly Lucan parables (centering around Luke 15); and the parables of Judgment (mainly from later chapters of Matthew).

It is interesting to note that this same general plan is followed by the other writers who attempt a classification, whether they follow the chronological order or not.

At first thought it seems that Richey's list is quite independent of this order. He believes that the parables should be grouped in sequence. He says: "The cardinal defect in the attempts at classification of the parables, on the part of expositors generally, is that they are based upon some artificial principle of arrangement, arising out of the dictatorial prepossessions of the author, and are not the result of the following up of the order of the gospel narrative itself..... The plan of taking the parables as they stand in the evangelical narrative itself, and treating each gospel by itself, would seem to be the only way of arriving at a satisfactory result" (1). He believes that it is necessary to take the gospel records separately because of the differing points of view that are represented in them. "We cannot without serious loss, both in the way of numbers and the ignoring of character traits, lump together in one indiscriminate mass the parables of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. They are as diverse, one from another, as the gospels in which they stand. Matthew wrote for the Hebrews, and his

(1). Richey, Parables of the Lord Jesus, p. xiii.

parables have upon them a theocratic stamp. Luke wrote for the Gentiles, and his parables have more of a human and universal character. The very same parable, it will be found, upon careful examination, is capable of an altogether different interpretation, according as it is applied to the Gentile in the state of nature, or the Jew in covenant relationship with God" (1).

But when we turn to Richey's classification of the parables, we find that he has Matthew's parables arranged as follows:

1. The seven fundamental parables (Matt. 13).
2. Parables of free grace.
 - a. Lost Sheep.
 - b. Unmerciful servant.
 - c. Laborers in vineyard.
3. Apologetic parables.
 - a. Two sons.
 - b. Wicked vinedressers.
 - c. Marriage of king's son.
4. Eschatological parables.
 - a. Two stewards.
 - b. Ten virgins.
 - c. Talents.
 - d. Sheep and goats.

It will be noticed that this list is very similar to that of Buttrick, the parables of free grace corresponding to the distinctly Lucan parables. The eschatological parables (1). Ibid., p. xii.

parables have been a characteristic mark. But when we turn to the Gospels, and the parables have more of a human and more varied character. The very same parable, it will be found, upon careful examination, is capable of an altogether different interpretation, according as it is applied to the life in the state of nature, or the Jew in covenant relationship with God" (1).

But when we come to Kierkegaard's classification of the parables, we find that he has Kierkegaard's parables arranged as follows:

1. The seven fundamental parables (Matt. 13).
2. Parables of time space.
 - a. Lost sheep.
 - b. Unprofitable servant.
 - c. Laborers in the vineyard.
3. Apologetic parables.
 - a. Two sons.
 - b. Wicked vineyarders.
 - c. Denial of Christ's son.
4. Eschatological parables.
 - a. Two stewards.
 - b. Ten virgins.
 - c. Talents.
 - d. Sheep and goats.

It will be noticed that this list is very similar to that of Harnack, the parables of time space corresponding to the eschatological parables. The eschatological parables

correspond to the parables of judgment. Buttrick also includes Richey's "apologetic parables" in his list of judgment parables.

Goebel bases his arrangement on the same general principle. His first division, including the seven in Matt. 13 and the Marcan parable of the seed growing secretly, is called the "first series of parables at Capernaum". He calls the other two divisions: "the later parables according to Luke"; and "the parables of the last period". In his final arrangement Goebel combines the parables of the last period with those of the first period at Capernaum. The arrangement, then, is as follows:

I. Nature and development of the kingdom.

1. Founding of the kingdom (the sower).
2. Development (fig tree, great supper, wicked husbandmen, and four parables from Matt. 13).
3. Completion (parables of the final period).

II. Right conduct of the members of the kingdom.

1. Toward God (Pharisee and publican, treasure, pearl, importunate friend, and unjust judge).
2. Toward the world.
 - a. To men (Good Samaritan and other Lucan parables).
 - b. To things (rich fool, rich man, unjust steward).

In his final arrangement Goebel has departed somewhat from the chronological order. The most noteworthy feature of his list is the way in which he breaks up the parables found in Matt. 13.

Bruce makes his division along theological lines. The parables grouped about Matt. 13 he labels "theoretic or didac-

tic"; the Lucan parables are called "evangelic"; the third division is called "prophetic or judicial". "Proceeding upon this classification, we in effect adopt as our motto the words of the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 5:9): 'The fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth', - the last word, "truth", answering to the first group; and the first, "goodness", answering to the middle group; and the second, "righteousness", answering to the last group. Christ was the Light of the world; and in His parabolic teaching He let His light shine upon men in beautiful prismatic rays, and the precious fruit is preserved for our use in three groups of parables: first, the theoretic parables, containing the general truth concerning the kingdom of God; second, the evangelic parables, setting forth the law of Christian life; third, the prophetic parables, proclaiming the righteousness of God as the Supreme Ruler, rewarding men according to their works" (1). Bruce admits, however, that one must use his own judgment as to the place that each parable must occupy in this division. A parable may be both evangelic and theoretic. Even if we should accept Bruce's division, there would be much difference of opinion as to the placement of the individual parables. This is enough to show the artificiality of the arrangement.

Hubbard seems to classify the parables merely for convenience of study. He divides them into three groups: major, minor and miscellaneous. The major group includes the "king-
(1). Bruce, The Parabolic Teaching of Christ, p. 4.

dom" parables of Matthew 13. There are five minor groups: new and old, difficulty, lost, prayer, and use of wealth. The miscellaneous parables include all that can not find a place in the scheme.

Stirling is interested mainly in the idea of the "kingdom". He groups the parables under six heads as follows:

1. The Kingdom of Heaven a Reign of Mercy and Salvation.
2. The Kingdom Hindered by Conditions in Man and by Counterfeit Christianity.
3. The Kingdom Advances Gradually, Mysteriously, Triumphantly.
4. A Kingdom of Seekers and Suppliants.
5. The Kingdom in Relation to Service and Reward.
6. The Kingdom Consummated in Judgment and Separation.

Stirling includes twenty-nine parables in this list (1).

Robinson, although he attempts no system of the parables, would agree with Stirling in his emphasis on the kingdom. He says: "The one idea, the one burden, the one message of Jesus' ministry was the Kingdom of God. His whole career was a perpetual exposition of that thought" (2). At another time he cautions against the attempt to classify Jesus' parabolic teaching. "The Kingdom of God taken as an abstract conception may of course be analyzed into organic elements, and material from the parables may be distributed among them. But the reverse process cannot be carried out. It is not

(1). Stirling, Christ's Vision of the Kingdom of Heaven.

(2). Robinson, The Parables of Jesus, p. 51.

possible to assign one integral part of Jesus' teaching to one parable and another to another" (1).

It seems, then, that there are three ways of dealing with the parables when we attempt to classify them. First, we may arrange them in chronological order. Buttrick and Richey favor this attempt, although they realize its limitations. Second, we may attempt some sort of theological arrangement. This is ~~what~~ Bruce does. Third, we may say with Robinson that the parables "stand in isolation from each other. Each parable met a different occasion, and there was no natural thought-relation of the occasions to each other" (2).

Arnot is also of the opinion that the parables cannot be arranged according to some artificial system. He says: "When Bauer has arranged them in three divisions, dogmatic, moral, and historic, he is compelled immediately to add another class called the mixed, as dogmatic-moral and dogmatic-historic, thereby proving that his logical classification has failed" (3).

If we make a careful study of Jesus' parables from the standpoint of the occasions that called them forth, we reach the conclusion that he did not intend to teach any theological system in the parables. Scholars seem to be agreed that the parables are not to be taken as proof of certain theological positions. Trench says: "The parables may not be made first sources and seats of doctrine. Doctrines otherwise and

(1). Ibid., p. 126. (2). Ibid., p. 123.

(3). Arnot, The Parables of Our Lord, p. 28.

possible to assign an integral part of them, because to
one parable and another to another" (1).

It seems, then, that there are three ways of dealing
with the parables when we attempt to classify them. First,
we may arrange them in chronological order. Second, and
third, we may arrange them in topical order. But the
first two ways, we may attempt some sort of chronological arrangement.
Third, we may attempt some sort of topical arrangement.
Fourth, we may attempt some sort of topical arrangement.
Fifth, we may attempt some sort of topical arrangement.
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Ninety-ninth, we may attempt some sort of topical arrangement.
One hundred, we may attempt some sort of topical arrangement.

It is also of the opinion that the parables cannot
be arranged according to some artificial system. However,
"When Jesus has arranged them in three divisions, domestic,
moral, and historic, he is compelled immediately to add
another class called the mixed, as domestic-moral and his-
toric-historic, thereby proving that his logical classification
has failed" (2).

If we make a careful study of Jesus' parables from the
standpoint of the occasions that called them forth, we reach
the conclusion that he did not intend to teach any logical
system in the parables. Scholars seem to be agreed that
the parables are not to be taken as proof of certain theo-
logical positions. French says: "The parables may not be made
final sources and seats of doctrine. Teaching otherwise and

(1) Ibid., p. 126. (2) Ibid., p. 127.
(3) Arnold, The Parables of Our Lord, p. 25.

already established may be illustrated, or indeed further confirmed, by them; but it is not allowable to constitute doctrine first by their aid. They may be the outer ornamental fringe, but not the main texture, of the proof. For, from the literal to the figurative, from the clearer to the more obscure, has been ever recognized as the order of scripture interpretation" (1).

As proof that Jesus did not intend to teach any theological system on the parables we may note that the parables each met a different and quite specific occasion. To be sure Matthew and Luke sometimes assign the same parable to different occasions. But the fact that they feel that it is necessary to have some definite occasion to call forth each parable would lead us to believe that there was strong evidence that Jesus did utter each parable with reference to a particular circumstance. The gospel writers felt, if this is true, that they must ascribe each parable to a particular occasion in order to reproduce the mind of Jesus. One of the apparent exceptions to this argument may be found in Matthew 13. Here it seems that Jesus was thronged by a great multitude of people on the hillside overlooking the lake, and for convenience in talking to them, took to a boat. From this vantage point he proceeded to preach a whole sermon of parables, the only occasion being that the people were there and he had something to say to them. This exception entirely disappears if we regard Matthew 13 as a compilation by the Evangelist. It is pretty generally assumed that the writer of the First Gospel grouped these Kingdom parables of Matthew 13, just as he grouped other teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the (1). Trench, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 41.

already established by the authorities, or indeed by the
courts, by the fact that it is not allowable to be
described first by their aid. They say he has other
friends, but not the same friends, of the same kind,
the friends to the friends, from the friends to the
friends, has been ever, respected as the order of
"information" (1).

It is not that I am not going to say any more
logical system as the system as we have seen the
each not a different and quite specific occasion, to be
Katharine and I have collected under the same points by different
occasions. But the fact that they feel that it is
to have some definite occasion to call them
would lead us to believe that there was some occasion
I have not seen each party with this sense of a particular
circumstances. The logical system is, it is true, true,
they must assume each party to a particular occasion in
order to reproduce the same of each, one of the
exceptions to this argument, say to find in each of them
it seems that there was involved by a great number of
people on the hillside overlooking the lake, and the
lakes in relation to them, took to a boat. From this
point he proceeded to present a whole series of questions,
only occasion being that the people were there and he
seems to be to show. This is a very interesting
it is not that I am not going to say any more
Joseph's argument about the friends of the friends,
is not that I am not going to say any more
(1). The friends of the friends, of the friends.

Mount. If we compare Matthew 13 with Mark 4, we find that in the latter case the number of parables is considerably reduced, while the setting for those that are included is entirely different. With the exception of this group in Matthew 13 nearly all the parables are uttered in answer to a specific question, either directly asked or implied. The best illustration of this fact is the parable of the "good Samaritan". A certain lawyer had asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus did not answer the question; instead of giving an answer, he told this parable which made all answer superfluous.

Even if we concede that the Kingdom of God lay at the center of Jesus' teaching, we need not conclude that there is any inherent system in the parables. In fact, this further proves a lack of system. The parables do not illustrate separate aspects of the kingdom. They are, rather, photographs of the kingdom, taken from different angles. In this way they reinforce each other and tend to give us a better balanced picture of the Kingdom of God.

We can well agree with Buttrick that "the chronological order, if it could be determined, would perhaps be the best"(1). But this is impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy. Since the gospels differ so widely in the arrangement of the parables, it is impossible to determine which is most chronologically accurate. Neither can we take any parable, and judge from its nature what place it is going to assume in the whole group. Robinson has a good thought at this point. (1). Buttrick, The Parables of Jesus, p. xxvii.

Now, if we compare this with the fact that the
 the latter case the number of persons is not
 while the latter case is not included in the
 different. With the exception of this group, the
 nearly all the persons are referred to as a
 question, either directly asked or implied. The
 position at this point is the position of the
 a certain lawyer had asked, "What is the
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 we can well agree with the fact that "the
 order, if it could be detected, would be the
 But this is impossible to determine with any
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 the group, it is impossible to determine which
 chronologically accurate. Neither can we take any
 and judge from the group what place it is
 in the whole group. Therefore, let a
 (1). But this, the position of the group, is

He says: "Whatever truth there may be - and there may be much truth - in making Jesus' ministry consist of a sunny forenoon of success, a hot noontide of controversy, and a sad afternoon of resignation, it would be very unsafe to distribute his parables and similes along the corresponding hours of such a day. For there may have been darkly suggestive incidents at the outset and brilliant touches of triumph toward the end; and each may have drawn forth its fitting parable" (1).

We conclude, therefore, that the parables of Jesus cannot be grouped into any logical system without many discrepancies and flaws in the system. However, any classification of the parables may be of great help to us in understanding the many phases of the one truth that is conveyed by them.

(1). Robinson, The Parables of Jesus, p. 124.

(2). Wilson, Notes on the Parables, p. 7.

(3). Gosnell, Parables of Jesus, p. 4.

is says: "Whatever truth there may be - and there may be
much truth - in what I have said, it is not a matter of
importance of success, a not a matter of controversy, and
and a matter of resistance, it would be very unwise to dis-
tribute this pamphlet and allow it to be converted into
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SNOWLAND
BOND

CHAPTER III

DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF A PARABLE.

Can a parable be defined? Trench thinks it is impossible to define a parable so as to "omit none of its distinguishing marks, and yet at the same time include nothing that was superfluous and merely accidental" (1). And when we look at some definitions for the purpose of comparison, we find that Trench was not far from the truth. Yet definitions, properly qualified, do help to an understanding of the meaning of the parable.

The Greek word from which our word parable is derived literally means "a throwing alongside". In the strict sense of the term, parable always involves a comparison. Perhaps the simplest definition is that a parable is an extended simile. Hubbard says that it is a word-picture. Goebel defines a parable in this way: "A narrative moving within the sphere of physical or human life, not professing to communicate an event which really took place, but expressly imagined for the purpose of representing in pictorial figure a truth belonging to the sphere of religion, and therefore referring to the relation of man or mankind to God" (2). Mitchell's definition is similar: "A parable is a fictitious, but probable, narrative, taken from the affairs of ordinary life, to

(1). Trench, Notes on the Parables, p. 9.

(2). Goebel, Parables of Jesus, p. 4.

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The Greek word from which our word parable is derived literally means "a following alongside". In the Greek sense of the word parable always involves a comparison. The simplest definition is that a parable is an extended simile. French says that it is a word-picture. He says that a parable is this: "A narrative saying within the sphere of physical or human life, not presented as an event which really took place, but expressly intended for the purpose of representing in pictorial form a truth belonging to the sphere of religion, and therefore referring to the relation of man or mankind to God" (2). Mitchell's definition is similar: "A parable is a fictitious, but probable, narrative, taken from the sphere of ordinary life, to

(1). French, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 9.

(2). Mitchell, *Parables of Jesus*, p. 1.

illustrate some higher and less-known truth" (1). Buttrick says: "The old definition, 'an earthly story with a heavenly meaning', can hardly be improved" (2). Taylor's definition is similar: "A narrative true to nature or to life, used for the purpose of conveying spiritual truth to the mind of the hearer" (3). Horne says: "A parable is a comparison between familiar facts and spiritual truths. This comparison may be short and pithy like 'If the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch' (Matt. 15:14), or it may be worked out in a story" (4). Swete defines a parable as "the act of laying one thing by the side of another for the purpose of comparing them together" (5).

The idea of comparison must be included in the definition of the parable. But it is a single comparison, not a series of comparisons. Hubbard helps to make this clear. He says: "It is not a string of pearls, or a connected series of truths. It is a single gem with such setting or background as shall display it to the best advantage. The parable is like a lens, which gathers many of the sun's rays and brings them to a focus upon a single point" (6).

What is the relation of parable to simile? to metaphor? to allegory? The simplest and easiest to understand of these figures of speech is the simile, which is a simple comparison

- (1). Mitchell, *The Parables of the New Testament*, p. 9.
- (2). Buttrick, *Parables of Jesus*, p. xv.
- (3). Taylor, *Parables of our Saviour*, p. 2.
- (4). Horne, *Jesus the Master Teacher*, p. 77.
- (5). Swete, *Parables of the Kingdom*, p. 1.
- (6). Hubbard, *Teachings of Jesus in Parables*, p. xvi.

illustrate some other and less-known truth" (1). Substituting
have: "The old definition, 'an earthly story with a heavenly
message', can hardly be improved" (2). Taylor's definition is
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purpose of conveying spiritual truth to the mind of the
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to allegory. The simplest and easiest to understand of these
figures of speech is the simile, which in a single comparison

- (1) Mitchell, The Parables of the New Testament, p. 2.
- (2) Mitchell, Parables of Jesus, p. xv.
- (3) Taylor, Parables of our Saviour, p. 2.
- (4) Horne, Jesus the Master Teacher, p. 17.
- (5) Swete, Parables of the Bible, p. 1.
- (6) Hubbard, Techniques of Jesus in Parables, p. xvi.

usually expressed by the word "like". "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven" (Matt. 13:33). It is easy to know what the comparison is, since it is expressly stated. The metaphor is also a comparison, but it is implied rather than specifically stated. If I were to say, "He traveled a rough road, but found success", anyone would know that I was only comparing human difficulties to a "rough road". The metaphor is not literal, and is not meant to be taken so. Jesus said that the Pharisees "devour widow's houses" (Luke 20:47). Other examples of the use of metaphor are these: "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13); "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14); plucking out the right eye (Matt. 5:29); laying up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20); motes and beams in eyes (Matt. 7:3); casting pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). A metaphor becomes intelligible either because of the obviousness of the comparison or through usage.

The parable bears the same relationship to the simile that the allegory has toward the metaphor. The parable is an extended simile, and the allegory is an extended metaphor. Since the comparison is expressed in the simile, it is also expressed in the parable. The parable is similar to the simile in that it illustrates a single point of comparison. The extended nature of the parable is simply for the purpose of giving the setting of the story. It is not so with the allegory. Each point and incident must be explained. The allegory is really a series of metaphors. Thus we see that the parable is like the allegory in some respects and quite different in others. Going back to the definitions of the parable we find

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 is like the allegory in some respects and quite different in
 others. So we look to the definition of the simile as well

that it resembles the allegory in that they both involve a comparison and that they both have a "heavenly meaning". But here the similarity ends. The parable is true to nature, but the allegory is usually unnatural or impossible. The allegory must be interpreted, so that we may know what each object and act in the narrative is supposed to represent. The parable, on the other hand, is so simple and obvious that the central teaching ought to stand out clearly.

The fable also has much in common with the parable. It also involves a comparison which is very obvious. It is in narrative form, like the parable, and thus can be easily remembered. Levison says that there are three parts to the parable: the introduction, the lesson, and the application. The same may be said of the fable. The story is told to bring out another meaning. The story also has a central focus. But there are also many differences. In the first place there is no "heavenly meaning" in the fable. "The fable teaches a merely prudential virtue. It recommends caution, thrift, foresight; and recommends them from the standpoint of human consequences" (1). The parable is religious; the fable is not.

Another difference between the parable and the fable is that the latter usually lives in the realm of the unnatural and the impossible. Trees and animals and even inanimate objects are endowed with human powers. Even the familiar story of the dog that lost the bone in the brook, while not impossible, is quite unlikely. Quite often the fable has a

(1). Buttrick, Parables of Jesus, p. xvi.

sting to it. It makes light of another's misfortune. There is apt to be a good laugh in a fable; but it is always at the expense of something or somebody. This is never true of the parable, which treats all life as sacred, looks upon people with "larger, other eyes", as Buttrick says. Still another difference between the parable and fable is seen in the moral lesson or application. The parable is more true to nature. The moral is not unnaturally thrust into it. The application is as natural as the story itself.

The parable, then, is quite different from the allegory, the fable, and the myth. (The myth, by its very definition, is seen to be far removed from the parable). But we are not to suppose that Jesus was a literary purist. As a matter of fact, since Jesus wrote nothing, it is impossible to say that he had any literary style. We must remember that, although Jesus was a great poet, he never intended that his teachings should be regarded as literature. His purpose was not literary. His whole purpose was to produce a certain effect in the thinking and the lives of his hearers. He may be expected, then, to have mixed his figures for the sake of emphasis and power. This may help to explain why there is such a difference of opinion on the extent of the parables. Jesus used simile, metaphor, proverb, parable, and even allegory to the extent that these various forms best suited his purpose.

We do not need to be greatly concerned as to what is a parable and what is not. Dr. Levison, who grew up in Palestine as a native, ought to understand the nature of the parable. He says: "The viewpoint as to what is strictly

parabolic and what is not depends on the individual's predilection, and no hard-and-fast rule is possible" (1). This does not mean, of course, that we are not to be as scholarly as possible in our study and interpretation of the parables. There has been too much of an attempt to allegorize the parables, on the theory that each student may interpret them as his fancy dictates.

Swete reminds us that myths and fables and allegories have been common in world literature for many centuries. Yet the parable, although it has been a familiar literary form, is peculiar to the teaching of Jesus. There are a number of parables in the Old Testament and in other literature. Yet "there is no other collection of 'parables' that can be placed in comparison with those which we find in the Gospels" (2). "Need we ask why Jesus chose parable rather than allegory? His mind was not mechanical: it was as fluid, as colorful, as spontaneous and real as life itself" (3).

- (1). Levison, *Parables: their Background*, p. xxiii.
- (2). Swete, *Parables of the Kingdom*, p. 2.
- (3). Buttrick, *Parables of Jesus*, p. xvii.

category of art, it is not dependent on the artist's personal
feeling, and no hard-and-fast rule is possible" (1). This
does not mean, of course, that we are not to be exclusively
concerned in our study and interpretation of the work.
There has been too much of an attempt to eliminate the
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as the last dictator.

These remarks are about style and feeling and composition
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- (1) . . . *Parables of Jesus*, p. 111.
- (2) . . . *Parables of Jesus*, p. 111.
- (3) . . . *Parables of Jesus*, p. 111.

CHAPTER IV

PURPOSE OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Since the parable is so uniquely characteristic of Jesus' method of teaching, we might well ask why he resorted to the parable so frequently. One thing seems certain, that the parables were usually spoken with an immediate purpose in mind. The teaching of the parable is not primarily general in its application. The synoptists almost invariably connected each parable with a specific circumstance. Although it may be true that the writers of the gospels did not have at hand the exact data concerning the occasion for each parable, yet the fact that they felt it necessary in most cases to connect each parable with an original specific occasion, is evidence toward the assumption that such an occasion actually did exist. We may be sure that the gospel writers would not knowingly falsify. It was their intention to reproduce the spirit and message of Jesus' teaching in as authentic a form as possible. With this conviction uppermost in their minds they reproduced many sayings and incidents that they did not understand, yet felt that they were representing the truth.

The Gospel writers were primarily evangelists. They wrote as propagandists, with the purpose of registering conviction in the hearts of the people to whom they wrote. Thus it is all the more remarkable that the parables are

usually recorded with reference to a particular circumstance. One might expect to find the parabolic teaching to be general, with no more occasion than the fact that there were on hand a crowd of people willing to listen. For instance, the parable of the two debtors may have for us a very general meaning: that a sense of gratitude leads to a willingness to serve. But this was not Jesus' purpose in using this parable. His purpose was to show Simon that he did not have as deep a feeling of forgiveness as the sinful woman had. Robinson says: "The one point toward which Jesus aims in any given parable, just as in the case of the orator, is conviction which shall issue in action of a certain kind at a certain time in a certain situation" (1).

Granting, then, that Jesus had an immediate purpose in using each parable, let us inquire as to his general purpose. Why did he use parables at all? Why would it not have been better to say what he wanted to say without introducing all these stories?

The first question that we shall consider in this connection is: Did Jesus change his method of teaching in the midst of his ministry? It is the conviction of a number of scholars that he was virtually driven to the use of the parable after he had been teaching for a year or two. Richey says: "It was not until about the close of the second year of his sacred ministry that our Lord began to teach regularly by parables.... Why should the earlier ministry be

(1). Robinson, Parables of Jesus, p. 27.

hortatory and didactic in its character, while the later is parabolic and marked by reserve?" (1). Morgan is of the same opinion. He says: "It seems evident that at this point in his ministry Jesus commenced practically a new method. He had usually spoken with perfect plainness and definiteness; now he began to present truth in the garb of the parable" (2). It is argued that Jesus was driven to this change by the force of the opposition against him. Richey writes along this line: "In consequence of the growing hostility of the Scribes and Pharisees and the leaders of the people, Jesus was compelled (as a rule) to adopt the plan of speaking by similitudes and comparisons, and not as heretofore, plainly and directly..... The difference between the two methods of teaching is to be accounted for by the change which, as the second year of our Lord's ministry was drawing to its close, began to manifest itself in the attitude of the nation and its leaders toward Him.... Now, it was at this crisis, and with the special object of bearing witness to this larger truth - the dawn of a new spiritual order, and the setting up of a universal kingdom - that our Lord began to teach regularly by parable. There are, indeed, occasional glimpses, given at an earlier time, in more than one notable parabolic saying, of the spiritual character of the new era, and of the difference between it

(1). Richey, Parables of the Lord Jesus, p. 3.

(2). Morgan, Parables of the Kingdom, p. 12.

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tween the two methods of teaching is to be accounted for
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spiritual order, and the setting up of a universal kingdom -
that our Lord began to teach resolutely by parables. . . .
are, indeed, occasional allusions, given at an earlier time,
in some than the notable parabolic saying, of the spiritual
character of the new era, and of the difference between it

- (1) Fisher, Parables of the Lord Jesus, p. 2.
- (2) Morgan, Parables of the Kingdom, p. 12.

and all that has preceded it, whether among Jews or Gentiles; but it is not until the latter half of the three years' ministry that this becomes the great burden of our Lord's teaching, and is dealt with systematically and in detail" (1). Swete likewise is convinced of this break in Jesus' method of teaching. He writes: "The use of this method began as far as we can judge, at a particular juncture in our Lord's life. His earlier teaching had excited strong opposition on the part of the Pharisees and Scribes, and was evidently but little understood by the crowds who followed Him. He could not cease from teaching, but He could change His manner of imparting truth; and this He did" (2). Wood suggests practically the same thing, as follows: "Mark suggests that Jesus adopted the method of teaching by parable when the ministry in Galilee had been in progress for some time. He seems to associate it with the period when, partly owing to the suspicion of the religious leaders and partly owing to the pressure of the crowds, Jesus began to withdraw from the cities and the synagogues and teach in the open air and in desert places"(3).

The opinions just quoted are based upon the assumptions that Jesus' public ministry was three years or more in duration - an assumption that is not clearly proven. But the greatest difficulty encountered by the theory is in the matter of chronology. It is impossible to determine

- (1). Richey, Parables of the Lord Jesus, p. 4.
- (2). Swete, Parables of the Kingdom, p. 3.
- (3). Wood, Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 916.

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Lord's teaching, and is dealt with systematically and in
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teaching, method of teaching; the writer: "The use of this
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strong opposition on the part of the Pharisees and Scribes,
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- (1) *History, Principles of the Lord Jesus, p. 1.*
- (2) *History, Principles of the Lord Jesus, p. 1.*
- (3) *Wood, Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 215.*

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whether a parable is to be placed in Jesus' early or his late ministry. But in the main, this assumption is undoubtedly true - that more and more as Jesus advanced toward the critical period, he resorted to the use of parable. But the change was a gradual rather than a sudden decision to teach by parable. He used parable from the very first of his ministry, and also taught didactically until the closing days.

The next question that faces us is this: If Jesus turned more and more to the use of the parable, what was his purpose in doing so? The synoptic records involve us in considerable difficulty at this point. Matthew says:

"Therefore I speak to them in parables, BECAUSE seeing THEY SEE NOT, and hearing THEY HEAR NOT, neither do they understand".

This is as much as to say: Since they are not understanding me, I must speak to them in a manner that will enable me to be understood. The only other interpretation of this would be that Jesus spoke in parables because WHEN HE USED PARABLES they could not understand. This seems unreasonable and ambiguous.

But there does not seem to be any such ambiguity when we look at the records in Mark and Luke. Mark says:

"Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables, THAT seeing THEY MAY see, and NOT PERCEIVE; and hearing THEY MAY HEAR, AND NOT UNDERSTAND" (Mk. 4:12).

The Lucan account is identical in meaning with the Markan:

"Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables, THAT seeing THEY MAY NOT SEE, and hearing THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND" (Luke 8:10).

Another example is to be placed in Jesus' early or his late ministry. But in the main, this assumption is incorrect. The fact is that more and more as Jesus advanced toward the critical period, he resorted to the use of parables. But the change was a gradual rather than a sudden decision to teach by parables. He used parables from the very first of his ministry, and also taught allegorically until the closing days.

The next question that faces us is this: If Jesus turned more and more to the use of the parable, what was his purpose in doing so? The synoptic records involve us in considerable difficulty at this point. Matthew says: "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

This is as much as to say: Since they are not understanding, I must speak to them in a manner that will enable us to be understood. The only other interpretation of this would be that Jesus spoke in parables because they were unable to understand. This seems unreasonable and ridiculous.

But there does not seem to be any such ambiguity when

we look at the records in Mark and Luke. Mark says:

"And you are given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables, that seeing they may see, and hearing they may hear, and not understand." (Mark 4:12)

The Lucan account is identical in meaning with the Markan:

"And you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." (Luke 8:10)

Mark is even more severe than Luke. Not content with stating the case, he adds the reason for the esoteric teaching:

"Lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them".

It is difficult to determine just why Mark came to misunderstand Jesus' purposes. Angus (1) has shown that the Graeco-Roman world was considerably influenced by the Mystery Religions and esoteric cults. St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians gives evidence of the fact that these secret cults had considerable influence. It is possible that Mark, who wrote twenty-five or thirty years after Jesus had spoken his parables, was influenced by these religions. He certainly misunderstood Jesus' meaning.

Matthew runs into difficulty when he substitutes for this vindictive passage in Mark a similar quotation from the prophet Isaiah:

"Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed" (Isaiah 6:9-10).

It is not our immediate purpose to inquire into the meaning of the Isaianic passage; but the whole problem here involved is so vital that it is not all together out of place to quote Buttrick's explanation: "Does the prophet there assert that it is God's purpose to harden his people's hearts and to avoid their conversion? If so, we must assign

(1). Angus, Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World.

(2). Buttrick, Parables of Jesus, p. 22.

Mark is even more severe than Luke. Not content with stating

the case, he adds the reason for the apostle's action:

"I feel deeply that I should be
forgiven them."

It is difficult to determine just why Mark says so

much about Jesus' forgiveness. (1) has known that

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religions. He certainly understood Jesus' teaching.

Mark's view is also difficult when he suggests

for this vindictive passage in Mark a similar passage

from the Gospel of Luke:

"They are blind, but understand not; and how we should
but perceive not. Like the heart of this people, they
have their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see
with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand
with their hearts, and turn again, and be healed."
(Luke 10:13-14)

It is not our immediate purpose to inquire into the

meaning of the Lukan passage; but the whole problem here

involved is so vital that it is not all together set at

place to quote Mark's explanation: "For the prophet

there saith that it is God's purpose to turn this people's

hearts not to avoid their conversion; it is, we must assume

(1)

the assertion to that unworthy view of God which exalts his sovereignty at the expense of his moral responsibility to his creatures; or which, at least, represents as designed whatever may be confidently predicted. Where we today would point to an analogy or result, the Jewish scriptures would frequently assume a purpose. Mark and Luke appear to accept the sternest meaning of Isaiah's words, and leave us to infer that Jesus adopted the parable-method in order to render his hearers insensible to divine truth; even as God in earlier days purposed the blinding of the eyes of a stubborn people. But a more gracious view, one more loyal to the whole scriptures and more in keeping with the 'soul's invincible surmise', is that the Isaianic passage may have been spoken in the irony of sorrow and in warning plea. The blindness was due, not to the Divine will and wish, but to the self-will of a stiff-necked generation. Accepting Isaiah's words at face value, it is still doubtful if Jesus used them in more than a general sense, namely, to compare a situation existent in Isaiah's day with the situation of his day" (1).

It would seem more logical to believe that the prophet is here speaking in ironic language. As for Matthew's quotation of these words, it is possible that this is an editorial insertion by the Evangelist and not the words of Jesus. Matthew, writing to Jewish readers, liked to quote scripture whenever possible. His statement that "unto them (1). Buttrick, Parables of Jesus, p. xx.

the assertion is that another view of the matter exists in
 government at the expense of his moral responsibility. It
 is assumed, or what, at least, is assumed, as designed
 to be a completely correct. There is today a
 point to an analogy or result, the Jewish scriptures which
 frequently assume a purpose. With and with regard to some
 the eternal meaning of Jewish words, and leave as a
 later that some adopted the term to be used in order to
 render his history responsible to divine law; even as God
 in earlier days purposed the blessing of the eyes of a
 thousand people. But a more serious view, one more
 to the end of things and more in keeping with the
 'new' invisible world, is that the Jewish people
 may have been spoken in the body of some and in some
 else. The blessing was due, not to the Divine will and
 that, but to the self-will of a self-willed people.
 According to Jewish words as they value, it is still more
 but it seems that there is here a central point, namely,
 to compare a situation existing in Jewish law with the
 situation of the day" (1).

It would seem more logical to believe that the
 proposal is more specific in Jewish language, as for instance
 question of these words, it is possible that this is an
 editorial insertion by the translator and not the words of
 Jesus. However, with the Jewish people, there is a great
 emphasis on the word 'promise'. His statement that "I am God"

is fulfilled the prophecy" indicates that Jesus' opponents were hard to convince, not that Jesus attempted to hide his meaning from them so that the prophecy might come true.

In the parables themselves we find much evidence in support of the theory that Jesus taught in parables that the people might understand. First, he expected to be understood and manifested surprise and perhaps disappointment at his disciples' failure to understand (Mark 7:18; 8:21; 4:13; 8:17; Luke 19:11; Matt. 15:16). Second, the fact is evident that the opposing groups did understand him (Luke 16:14; Mark 12:28; Matt. 15:12; 21:45). Third, we are told that Jesus rejoiced that the people had the gospel preached to them. What need is there to rejoice if he preaches the gospel in such a way as to stop the ears of his hearers? Evidently many "common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37); it is also stated that "harlots and publicans were crowding into the kingdom" (Matt. 21:23). These are not indications of obscurity. Fourth, many of Jesus' parables are so simple, so direct, of such evident meaning that it does not seem possible that he could have had any other purpose than to make his truth more accessible to all the people. Fifth, one naturally comes to ask the question: If Jesus did not want them to understand, would it not have been better to remain silent and say nothing at all? (1).

It seems far more plausible to suppose that Jesus meant to reveal his teaching about the kingdom of heaven

(1). Summary from outline of course of lectures on "The Teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels", given by Dr. W. J. Lowstuter.

It seems that you have been able to observe that Jesus

would to reveal his teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven

(1). Certainly the teaching of course of Jesus on "The

Teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels", given by

Dr. W. J. L. B. B. B.

to as many as possible. Therefore he used parables. All the world loves a story. This is one of the reasons for the perennial success of the fable. The story will illustrate and illumine one's meaning when all other methods fail. Jesus had much to teach the people about the kingdom. Many of his ideas **were** directly opposed to what the people had grown up to believe. It was only by use of the parable that he was able to get them to see clearly his way of life. In cases where his teaching was not understood the central idea of the parable would be remembered, so that the teaching would not be lost. It was Jesus' purpose to illumine lives rather than to darken them. He found them dark enough. His whole purpose was to bring people the vision of the kingdom that would result in larger living for all. It is the belief of Frothingham that Jesus used the parable for the purpose of illumination. He says: "The parables were spoken by an Oriental to Orientals, and were understood immediately, even in the brief form in which they were uttered. They were so imbued with the spirit of the people to whom they were addressed, so native to the soil, so fragrant with the aroma of the ground, so bright with the Eastern sunshine, so breezy with the Eastern air, - they were so full of local allusions, they reflected so clearly the manners and customs of the country and the period, that no amplification was necessary. The reciter could leave his auditors to fill up the empty spaces in the little narrative. The short tale of two or three sentences was long

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Eastern sun and so sweet with the Eastern air, - that
were no full of local allusions, they reflected so clearly
the manners and customs of the country and the people, that
no explanation was necessary. The people would leave him
and go to fill up the empty spaces in the little villages.
.... The short tale of two or three sentences was long

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and full to those whose fancy could furnish instantly all that the speaker omitted, and could put in the requisite light, shade, and color on the spot. But all this advantage of time, place, knowledge, genius, is lost for us" (1).

Jesus had a difficult task if he was to appeal to the interest and hold the attention of all the diverse groups to whom he talked. One of his purposes likely was to stimulate inquiry just as much as possible. "He chose that form of teaching which would be most plain to the unlearned, most stimulating to the thoughtful, and most attractive to all" (2). Poultrymen tell us that the best way to feed chickens is to scatter at least some of their feed in the straw where they will be required to scratch for it. The human mind sometimes responds to the same kind of stimulation. If the truth is partly hidden one will work harder to appropriate it than if it is too readily accessible. Jesus probably recognised and made use of this bit of human psychology. "Occasionally used to conceal for a time the full meaning of the speaker, the chief and common object of a parable is by the story to win attention and maintain it; to give plainness and point, and therefore power, to truth. By awakening and gratifying the imagination, the truth finds its way more readily to the heart, and makes a deeper impression on the memory" (3).

It may be argued that Jesus wanted to test the char-

- (1). Frothingham, *Stories from the Lips of the Teacher*, p. iv.
- (2). Hubbard, *The Teaching of Jesus in Parables*, p. xiv.
- (3). Guthrie, *Parables Read in the Light of the Present Day*, pp. 3-4.

acter of his hearers. If there were some that would not listen to him anyway, it would save time to find that out in the beginning. The football coach has to cut his squad down to a picked number of men who know most about football; and these men go on learning more about football while those who know very little are not given a chance to learn any more. Gideon felt it necessary to weed out the men in his army until he had but three hundred of tried and true soldiers. Preceding Matthew's statement as to the reason for Jesus' teaching by parables we find this explanation: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matt. 13:12). Hubbard says that the food that will make one person strong and healthy may make another ill. Also the heavy weight that will prove a tonic to one man's muscles and serve to strengthen them more, will also serve to crush the man of flabby and weak muscles.

These arguments may be true enough. But what do they prove? An excuse for Jesus to go ahead and teach those who are easy to teach and reject the hard to teach? No; these arguments merely reflect a condition. It is because of the prevalence of this natural condition that Jesus uses the parable to overcome such a condition. Jesus' teachings did not have a double sense, - the didactic teaching for the people and the parables for his disciples. In the first

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his army until he had put three hundred of them and three
soldiers. Preaching Matthew's statement as to the reason
for Jesus' teaching by parables we find this explanation:
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says that the food that will make one person strong and
healthy may make another ill. Also the heavy weight that
will prove a tonic to one man's muscles and nerve to others
then than more, will also serve to crush the man of flabby
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are easy to teach and reject the hard to teach? These
arguments merely reflect a condition. It is because of the
prevalence of this natural condition that Jesus was able
possible to overcome such a condition. Jesus' teachings did
not have a double nerve, - the double teaching for the
people and the parables for his disciples. In the first

place, it is clear that all were to know the mysteries of the kingdom, if they were willing to learn. Jesus had no esoteric secrets; the only condition was receptivity on the part of his hearers. Mark 4:10 states clearly that this so-called inner meaning was not confined to the Twelve. Mark also says: "And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it; and without a parable spake he not unto them" (Mark 4:33-34). Second, there is no trace of any subtle meaning in any of Jesus' detailed explanations. Following the passage just quoted in Mark are these words: "But privately to his own disciples he expounded all things". This is the most natural thing to do, - to further elaborate and discuss what had previously been said, just as any teacher would do with his pupils. Third, there are several parables that Jesus "explained", and their interpretations contain nothing whatever that the ordinary people could not have understood quite as well as the disciples. Fourth, the double sense would require that "the moral" be attached to each parable when the teaching was finally committed to the public at large as eventually it must be (1).

There is much to be said, however, in favor of the indirect method that was used by Jesus. This is also well illustrated by Nathan's parable to David. Although this par-

(1). Summary from lectures on "The Teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels", given by Dr. W. J. Lowstuter.

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able is not so true to life as were the parables of Jesus, Nathan was skilful enough in its use to lead the king to convict himself when direct words would probably only have served to make him angry. In a similar way Jesus' parables of reproof were flank attacks rather than direct onslaughts. "The parables must in fact have veiled the truth from those who were not ready to receive it in its naked simplicity, while at the same time they preserved it in the memory, in readiness for the time, if it ever came, when men would be prepared for it" (1). "By veiling the truth, it (the parable) guarded it from raillery" (2). The parables served to disarm prejudice against Jesus' teaching; they served as "the veil which Jesus put over the face of truth" (3). "In practical morals analogy is employed to surprise and so overcome an adverse will, rather than merely to help a feeble understanding. In this department most of the Lord's parables lie. When a man is hardened by indulgence in his own sin, so that he cannot perceive the truth that condemns it, the lesson which would have been kept out, if it had approached in a straight line before his face may be brought home effectually by a circuitous route in the form of a parable. When the conscience stands on its guard against conviction you may make the culprit a captive ere he is aware. The Pharisees were frequently outwitted in this manner.

- (1). Swete, Parables of the Kingdom, p. 4.
- (2). Buttrick, Parables of Jesus, p. xxi.
- (3). Taylor, Parables of our Saviour, p. 9.

this is not so true in life as was the situation of Jesus.
 Nathan was killed almost in the use of the knife.
 considered himself when faced with death as a martyr.
 seemed to make his way. To a soldier was Jesus, however.
 of a great war. I am not sure if I am right or not.
 "The parallel with the fact have yielded the truth from which
 who were not ready to receive it in the same manner.
 while at the same time they preserved it in the same manner.
 readiness for the time, it is ever ready, and will be
 prepared for it" (1). "By virtue of the truth, it is the same
 essential to the truth" (2). The parallel seems to be
 very different. Jesus, however, who seemed to be
 very much Jesus but over the face of death" (3). "In
 practical moral analysis is applied to analysis and so
 overcome an alive will, rather than merely to help a
 people understanding. In this movement, most of the world's
 people live. When a man is helped by intelligence in life
 own mind, so that he cannot perceive the truth that comes
 to the world which would have been kept out. As it is
 approached in a different time before the fact and the reason
 more effectively by a different world in the form of a
 people. When the conscience shows an idea which is
 conviction and yet also the subject a conviction and is
 aware. The parallel was frequently mentioned in this manner.

- (1) Jesus, Parallel of the Kingdom, p. 10.
- (2) Jesus, Parallel of the Kingdom, p. 10.
- (3) Jesus, Parallel of the Kingdom, p. 10.

With complacent self-righteousness they would stand on the outside of the crowd, and, from motives of curiosity, listen to the prophet of Nazareth as he told his stories to the people, until at a sudden turn they perceived that the graphic parable which pleased them so well, was the drawing of the bow that plunged the arrow deep into their own hearts" (1).

(1). Arnot, Parables of our Lord, p. 18.

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CHAPTER V

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLES

We are told by Goebel that we do not yet have a fool-proof method of interpretation of the parables. But he does think that there is complete agreement that each parable has a central, definite teaching that can be stated briefly. He also suggests that, although the other details may not represent something as they do in the allegory, the whole structure of the parable is essential.

The following guides to the understanding of the parables are given by Levison.

1. What is the background of the parable?
2. How much of local color is elaboration, and how much is essential to the essence of the lesson?
3. What is the pith of the parable, answerable in one sentence?

It is certainly true that if interpreters had kept more in mind the nature of Jesus' everyday life out of which the illustrative material for the parables grew, they would not have been so prone to look for hidden meanings in the parables. As an example of dallying with hidden meanings, see Trench's exposition of the parable of the leaven. Although Trench warns against allegorising the parables, he falls into this error himself. He wonders why

it is that it is a woman who hides the leaven in the three measures of meal. He says that since it is also a woman who lost the coin (Luke 15:8), it is probable "that the Divine Wisdom, the Holy Spirit, which is the sanctifying power in humanity, may be meant"(1). A woman would be more appropriate than a man because the Church, which is the organ of the Spirit's working, "evidently would be most fitly represented under the image". But why should this woman, who symbolises the Church, take THREE measures of meal? Some say that it represents the spread of the Gospel through the three parts of the world. Others say it represents the leavening of the whole race through the three sons of Noah, namely: Shem, Japhet, and Ham. Others, "like Jerome and Ambrose, find in it a pledge of the sanctification of spirit, soul, and body". Trench thinks that all of these suggestions are good. Buttrick, however, suggests that it would be more to the point to think that Jesus mentioned three measures of meal because that was the number that he had seen his mother use when she made a batch of bread.

It is in this simple background of Jesus' life that we will find some of our richest sources for the interpretation of the parables. He had seen a hen clucking to her chicks many a time. He had seen a plowman ruin his furrow by looking back to see how straight it was. He had been a guest at weddings. It was a common thing to see children

(1). Trench, Notes on the Parables, p. 100.

playing at their games. It was not at all unusual to see a shepherd go out into the brush and hunt for a sheep that had strayed from the flock. Although it would usually be an exceptional thing for a woman to call in all her neighbors when she had found her lost coin, yet it is not outside the realm of probability. If she was a woman living in poverty, she would most naturally want to tell her friends about it.

"In the comparisons and parables of Jesus we see the little one-roomed house, so small that a single lamp gives light to all who are in it. Within the room the parents and children sit (recline?) at the table, and the dog eats of the crumbs that are carelessly let fall from its edge. We go out of the door and see the little birds that pick up their nourishment day by day and have no barns into which they gather any accumulated produce. In the distance an eagle swoops down upon the carrion. We take a trip down to the market place in the cool of the day and see the children playing at their acted charades of wedding and funeral. Night comes on. The house door is closed and barred. The father is in bed with the children and unwillingly lets his sleep be broken by the persistent knocking of a needy friend whose guest has arrived late in the day. Out there in the night, too, is the unseen hostile neighbor whose spite is sowing tares in his enemy's wheat field, and the thief sneaking through the darkness to dig through the mud wall of the unwatched house" (1). This gives us a

(1). Robinson, The Parables of Jesus, p. 58.

playing at their games. It was not at all unusual to see a
group of boys and girls and even a few men
and women from the town. Although it was usually
an occasional thing for a woman to call in to see
some one she had known for some time, but it was not
the kind of familiarity. It was a woman living in
company, and she usually went to see her friends
about it.

"In the neighborhood and vicinity of houses and the
little one-room house, as well as a single large
house to all the rest in it. Working for the
and entered the (building) at the table, and the
of the house that she usually sat at the table.
The rest of the house and the little one-room
as their work was done by day and night and
which they gather and accumulated money. In the
an early house down upon the street. It was a
to the market place in the town. It was the
entire place at their and the houses of the
house. With some of the houses that is close to the
The father is in the house and the mother
into his sleep he is shown by the mother as a
nearly found those who had arrived late in the day. But
there in the night, too, is the mother and the father
whose eyes to see to his every word and
and the father speaking through the darkness to his
one and all of the household house." (1). This gives us a

picture of the way in which Jesus drew his parable-pictures from actual life - conditions which anybody could understand.

"In the world of nature, Jesus never opens rivers upon the bare heights (Isa. 41:18), or hears the mountains and hills singing or the trees clapping their hands (Isa. 52:12). Men actually do build their houses upon the rock, and the rain and floods and wind attack them (Matt. 7:25). In the parables the only signs Jesus sees in heaven are natural ones. The sky is red and lowering (Matt. 16:3); the lightning falls (Luke 10:18); the rising cloud is followed by the shower and the south wind by the heat (Luke 12:54). The green tree when its season is over becomes dry (Luke 23:31). In the animal world Jesus sees no picture of the wolf and lamb lying down together, or the lion eating straw like the ox (Isa. 11:6f.). He does see sheep in the midst of wolves (Matt. 10:16), children's bread cast to the dogs (Mark 7:27), hens gathering their chickens (Matt. 23:37), and eagles swooping upon carrion (Matt. 24:28).

"The functions and troubles of the body are such as ordinary men may have: the right eye may be diseased (Matt. 5:29), and food may be digested (Matt. 15:11-17). Among family relationships, little children play and quarrel (Matt. 11:16-19), a man sends his two sons into his vineyard (Matt. 21:28f.), or lets one of them have his share of his money in advance (Luke 15:11). There is no talk of tutors (1 Cor. 4:15), or of adoption (Gal. 4:5).

These Pauline things are not sufficiently lowly, domestic, or universally human.

"In the field of social and household customs, the groomsmen cannot mourn at the wedding (Mark 2:19). New wine is not put into old wineskins, but into new (Mark 2:22). Women hide the leaven in the meal (Luke 13:21). A king makes a marriage feast for his son (Matt. 22:2). A procession of young women goes out to meet a bridegroom (Matt. 25:1). The thief prowls (Luke 12:39). A piece of money is lost and friends are gathered when it is found (Luke 15:8f.). Pharisee and publican alike go up to the temple to pray (Luke 18:10).

"In the realm of buildings, the houses have an inner chamber and a top (Matt. 10:27). The usual pit is dug and the tower is built for the vineyard (Mark 12:1). Keys are used to unlock doors (Luke 11:52). A man who intends to build a tower makes his preliminary estimate (Luke 14:28). In agricultural activities a man casts seed on the earth (Mark 4:26). He does not gather thorns of figs or grapes of bramble bushes (Luke 6:44). After he has laid his hand on the plow he carelessly and undecidedly looks back (Luke 9:62). But as we have previously said, there is no grafting mentioned (cf. Rom. 11:19).

"In the business world, business is business. Men lay up treasures (Matt. 6:19). Merchants seek pearls (Matt. 13:45). Nets are cast into the sea (Matt. 13:47).

These findings...
on universal...

"In the (19) of social and household...

...at the (19) of (19)...

...is not out of (19)...

...the (19) of (19)...

...a (19) of (19)...

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Creditors make a reckoning (Matt. 18:23). Householders hire laborers (Matt. 20:1f). In the political and official world, a kingdom or a city may be divided against itself (Mark 3:24-27). Unfair judges do not do their duty (Luke 18:2f). Aspiratns for office visit the distant capital (Luke 19:12). Lastly, in the military matters, violent men use force (Matt. 11:12). The strong man fully armed guards his property (Luke 11:21), and one king meditates war against another (Luke 14:31).

"It is a remarkable fact that Jesus' image-world was larger than that of any other biblical character, while at the same time it was also more lowly and commonplace" (1).

If we keep in mind this background out of which the parables grew and also the fact that Jesus had a specific situation in mind when he uttered each parable, we will be saved from much false interpretation. Hubbard says there is too much read into the parables and not enough read out of them. Hubbard may be right when he says that the lesson in each parable is different from the lessons in the other parables - that no two parables teach the same lesson. But this does not allow us to say that Jesus had in mind to teach so many separate lessons. He would have taught the same specific lesson over and over again, had the occasion arisen. Perhaps he did so. The gospel writers have each made up (their) own lists, and arranged the par-

(1). Robinson, The Parables of Jesus, pp. 75-77.

ables as they saw fit.

There are a number of precautions that need to be taken in order to safeguard the interpretation of the parables.

1. Determine whether the passage is parable or allegory. If it is a parable, there is no law against using one's imagination in the field of allegory provided that the one who does so says that the allegorising is his own work and not in the purpose of him who first told the parable. We have already illustrated Trench's susceptibility to allegorise the parables. One of the best examples of such a flight of the imagination is found in Kirk's book (1). In his list of the parables he has a doctrine to match each one. The parable of the tares represents the imperfect Church. The Sower is the Gospel sent from God to save man. The mustard seed signified that the Church will become universal. The rich man and Lazarus and the rich fool illustrate the fact that death ends probation. In the simple parable of the good Samaritan: the traveler is mankind, the thieves are the trials of life, the priest and Levite represent selfish formalists, and the good Samaritan represents the true disciples. This story was told to illustrate real neighborliness; but in this allegorical flight, the meaning is totally destroyed. Or take another parable, the unmerciful servant. Kirk renders it as follows: the king means God; the servants represent men; the reckoning equals daily awakening of conscience; the servant largely indebted

(1). Kirk, Parables of our Saviour.

which is the new life.

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taken in order to understand the interpretation of the

parable.

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one who does so says that the allegorist in his own work

and not in the purpose of his work that he is allegorizing.

We have already illustrated Thomas's responsibility in

allegorizing the parables. One of the best examples of such

a kind of the interpretation is found in St. Augustine (1).

In the first of the parables he has a definite to explain

each one. The parable of the sower represents the different

Churches. The Sower is the Gospel seed that has been sown.

The mustard seed signifies that the Church will become

universal. The other two and Lazarus and the rich fool

illustrate the fact that both earth and heaven, in the eyes

of the parables of the good Samaritan, the traveler is warned,

the thieves are the thieves of life, the thief and the

represent not the Samaritan, and the good Samaritan repre-

sents the thief. This story was told to illustrate

real nationalism; but in this allegorical film, the

parable is the story of the rich fool and the poor man.

Allegorical narrative, this parable is an allegory in the

same way; the various elements are the various elements

of the parable of the good Samaritan; the parable is largely

(1). Luke, Parables of our Saviour.

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means that all men are viewed as having offended God; the inability to pay means that no man can pay the debt of his past sins; the command to be sold means that God's judgment is executed or threatened; the entreaty equals prayer for forgiveness; the free remission of the debt means that forgiveness is free; the second servant represents the universal tendency of man to injure man; the violent demand means revenge; the suppliant illustrates man confessing wrong to his fellow-men; the refusal equals pride and revenge; the report to the king means that God knows all of our actions; the king's reply is God's treatment of revenge. If one were to follow Kirk through all this series, it would take a wizard to know what the parable meant to teach.

2. If the passage is a parable, seek first for the vital point of comparison which is the key to the situation. Mitchell says: "In the interpretation of the parables, we shall always best reach the spiritual lesson, by grasping, first, the main and central truth, to teach which the parable was given" (1).

3. The interpretation should proceed from the point of view of the one great central suggestion. Buttrick says that the parable is a flash of light, not a mosaic. The secret of interpretation is to train the gaze on the "flash of light". The central teaching is the only important part of the parable. The parable is not meant to back up theological opinions. It is not dogma, but life.

4. In case there may happen to be other incidental

(1). Mitchell, Parables of the New Testament, p. 24.

points of contact or comparison, these may be developed, but must not be allowed to confuse the teaching involved in the main point of contact. The story of the prodigal son is a case in point here. The incident of the elder brother refers to Jesus' opponents who had no interest in the ~~rec~~/ama- tion of the outcasts of society. But the main teaching of the story refers to God's love and forgiveness. We should remember, too, that many details of the story have no separate meaning whatever, except that they help to complete the picture in a natural way (1).

Hubbard warns against attempting the expository method of interpretation. The separate incidents of the story have meaning only in so far as they aid in focusing attention on the topic at the center.

5. Finally, Hubbard warns against too great a display of erudition. The parables are best understood in a child-like receptivity of mind, unprejudiced and eager. Hubbard strenuously objects to Arnot's essentials of interpretation, which are as follows: "Of the parables it is particularly true that faith is necessary to the full appreciation of their meaning. another cognate requisite is sympathy with which Jesus took ^{with} of human nature in its fallen state.

Subordinate qualifications are:

1. The faculty of perceiving and appreciating analogies.
2. A stern logic.
3. Some competent acquaintance, not only with the Scrip-

(1). Outline from lectures on "Synoptic Gospels" by
W. J. Lowstuter.

point of a fact or conclusion, show any as developed, but must not be allowed to obscure the meaning involved in the main point of contrast. The story of the trial is a case in point here. The object of the trial is to refer to Jesus' opponents who had no interest in the truth of the outcome of reality. The main lesson of the story refers to our love and forgiveness. It should be remembered, too, that many details of the story have no separate meaning whatever, except that they help to complete the picture in a natural way (1).

Hubbard wants to avoid the explanatory nature

of interpretation. The separate incidents of the story have meaning only in so far as they aid in forming a picture on the basis of the center.

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1. The faculty of perceiving and appreciating analogies.

2. A clear logic.

3. Good consistent acquaintance, not only with the script-

(1). Outline from lectures on "Symbolic Language" by W. L. Gifford.

tures, but also with the doctrines which the Scriptures contain, arranged in a dogmatic system.

4. Some knowledge of relative history, topography, and customs" (1). Hubbard says that the teaching of the parables is so simple that the mind of the child can understand.

Perhaps there is an element of truth in both these views. If so, this would not be the first paradox of history. It is true that the key to the understanding of the parables is in their simplicity, not in involved technicalities. Yet no one has ever completely comprehended the truth that lies wrapped up in the parables. The people who first heard them did not always understand. Neither did the men who first wrote them down. Nor has anyone who has studied them in the written form. We can profit much if we follow Hubbard's suggestion: "The value of a parable does not depend upon the new and varied truth that we are able to extort from it, but upon our progressive and practical application of its single truth to our daily life" (2).

(1). Arnot, Parables of our Lord, pp. 33-34.

(2). Hubbard, Teaching of Jesus in Parables, p. xix.

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(1). *Hubbard, Parables of our Lord*, pp. 33-34.

(2). *Hubbard, Teaching of Jesus in Parables*, p. xii.

CHAPTER VI

APPLICATION OF THE PARABLES

The important fact about each parable is not the parable itself but the application that is made of it. We have already stated that the parables grew out of the common situations of life. At first thought one might conclude that the later parables were exceptions at this point. Although the scene of the last judgment is not strictly a parable, it does bear a close relationship to the parables. In this instance, at least, Jesus presents a picture that is not commonly seen. This is not a picture of earth at all. Yet it is common in that it deals with relationships that people commonly think about. At the same time, the story is remembered because it is so striking. But in this instance, as in all the parables, the teaching-value is not found in the story but in the application. The teaching of this story is that people should be classified according to their spirit, of helpfulness rather than according to their wealth, social position, family connections, intellect, religious preference, or race. This was the teaching in the first century, and it is also the teaching in the twentieth century.

In making our application of the parables to twentieth century conditions, we must always remember that the parables came directly out of the life of the first century.

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In making the application of the parables to twentieth-century conditions, we must always remember that the parables were directly out of the life of the first century.

The story itself is merely the husk that protects the grain. It is the pail that holds the water. Water in the twentieth century is just the same as water in the first century, but the pail may be different. The parable-story may need re-interpretation in our day to suit the changed methods of living. Few of the parables, if transferred literally to present-day society, would fit the changed conditions. But the application that Jesus made of them is perennially modern. As Buttrick says, they are more modern than today's newspaper, because the newspaper must follow the fashions (1).

Because the parables are so "modern", they have great teaching value. Not only is there great teaching value in the application of Jesus' parable, but also in the parable method. The whole world loves a story. It is because of this fact that the fable is remembered so well. We notice the same effect produced by the use of illustration in a public address or a sermon. Constant exposition is likely to weary the listeners. But the instant the speaker begins to tell a story, if he tells it well, there is a revival of interest on the part of his audience. The story wins where other methods of teaching often fail.

The parables of Jesus should and could be applied concretely to modern life. We need not stop with the enunciation of the specific application that Jesus gave to each parable. We should remember the situation that pro-

(1). Buttrick, The Parables of Jesus, p. xxix.

duced the parable and the application that Jesus made, and then proceed to make fresh application of the principle in every possible case where the same law holds good. Buttrick gives this as his reason for writing his book (1). Luccock has given us the best modern application of the parables, although his small volume includes only sixteen parables. He says that his purpose is not to "attempt to present a fresh exposition of the parables... The chapters aim, rather, to make an application of the parables to the conditions of present-day life" (2). In each case studied Luccock takes Jesus' application and shows how it can be carried into many phases of modern life. The lost sheep and the lost coin emphasize the worth of the individual. Luccock shows the need for this same attitude toward the worth of the individual to-day. Many people see in the vastness of the universe a corresponding decrease in the ultimate worth of human personality. An astronomer is reported to have defined mankind as "a small but boisterous bit of organic scum that for the time being covers part of the surface of one small planet". In the face of such cynicism we need to emphasize the worth of the individual. We need this emphasis also because of the machine temper of our time.

Luccock brings a fresh application of the parable of the prodigal son, showing that both sons were in sin.

(1). Ibid., p. xxx.

(2). Luccock, *Studies in the Parables of Jesus*, p. 7.

He asks the question: "Suppose the prodigal had met his elder brother before he had met his father, what would have happened?" (1) After suggesting that the prodigal would probably have gone back to the far country, Luccock asks if it is not true that many "elder brothers" to-day, who profess to be followers of Christ, are meeting the "prodigals" on their return, and driving them away from the Father.

It is because it shows a fresh application of Jesus' parables to modern life that Luccock's book is so stimulating. He asks what would be the attitude of society to-day toward the rich fool. Would he be pointed out as "one of our leading citizens"? Is society trying to gain the whole world and thus in danger of losing its soul? Are nations striving for more power rather than better citizens? Do we need the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven to give us reassurance in a time of pessimism and skepticism? Are the evils of the world likely to cause us to say, "What's the use?" Does not the story of the unmerciful servant show us to-day as it has always shown people the forgiving attitude of God, which is the attitude that people ought to take to each other? If we were forgiven "our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us", would we be forgiven much? Do most people show a lackadaisical attitude toward their limited talents, excusing themselves by saying, "I have no talent for that sort of thing"? Are there any "Pharisees" at-large to-day, looking with scorn upon those whom they think are their

(1). Ibid., p. 26.

He asks the question: "Suppose the problem had not been
either brother before he had set his feet, what could have
happened?" (1) After suggesting that the problem would
probably have gone back to the far country, Lincoln asks
if it is not true that many "other problems" to-day, who
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sort of thing?" Are there any "talents" at-large to-day,
looking with scorn upon those who have talents and are
(1) Lincoln, p. 25.

inferiors?

We could go through all the parables, as Luccock does with sixteen of them, and find that they apply as effectively to New York or Boston in 1930 A.D. as they did to Capernaum and Jerusalem in 30 A.D. The message of the parables takes no account of time. It is as eternal as truth.

interview

We could not check all the names, as the list

does with sixteen of them, and find that they were

effectively so New York or Boston in 1915 & 16. As they did

to Cooper and Johnson in 1915 & 16. The names of the

persons taken in account of time. It is an effort to

truth.

SHOWFARAD

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

In this study we have tried to keep in mind that the parable has two parts, namely: the story and the application. In making the application there are two rules to follow. The first is to look for the point of the story. In the parable of the prodigal son, which is often called the ideal parable, the point is found in the treatment of the prodigal by the father and the elder brother. It might at first appear that there are two points to this story, since the elder brother and the father took different attitudes toward the prodigal. But the point of the story is found in this contrast. It is in connection with this nucleus that the application is made. In this case the application would be this: You are the elder brother. When the prodigal comes to see the error of his way and desires to return to the Father, see to it that you are as willing to welcome him as the Father is. The second rule is to look for the original occasion for the story. In the case of the prodigal son the occasion was the remark of the Pharisees and scribes, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2). The publicans and sinners were eager to follow the higher way of life that Jesus was revealing to them. But the Pharisees thought he ought not to associate with them.

CHAPTER VII

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The point of the story is found in the attitude of the elder brother rather than the attitude of the prodigal. Sometimes it is difficult to find the occasion that called forth the parable. But there is pretty good evidence that every parable had its separate occasion.

We should keep in mind also that Jesus drew his parables from life. All the details were familiar to the people to whom they were spoken. The common, ordinary, every-day events and associations were woven into the fabric of the parables. Stories such as the house that was swept and garnished, all ready for the return of the demon with seven other ones is an exception. According to the definition of the parable, this story would be excluded, yet belief in demons was a universal fact in Jesus' day.

But, although the parables were drawn from the most commonplace events of life, they were unusual in some particular or other. In one parable a man working twelve hours and another man working one hour are paid the same amount of money, - a very unusual thing to do. In another parable one man owes three million dollars and begs to be freed from this debt only to go out and punish another man who owes him seventeen dollars. The parable of the good Samaritan is unusual in that the hated Samaritan (of all men) helped the man in need, while the priest and Levite (men who would at least be expected to help a man of their own religion and nationality) pass by on the other side. The fact that the parables are so unusual makes them easily remembered.

The point of the story is to show the attitude of the
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We should keep in mind also that Jesus drew his
parables from life. All the details were familiar to the
people to whom they were spoken. The common, ordinary,
every-day events and associations were woven into the tex-
ture of the parables. Stories such as the house that was
built on sand and the fig tree were ready for the ears of the hearers
with every other word in an evangelist. According to the
definition of the parable, this story would be a parable.
yet belief in demons was a universal fact in Jesus' day.
But, although the parables were drawn from the most
commonplace events of life, they were unusual in some
particular or other. In one sense a man working in a
field and another man working in a vineyard and the other
amount of money, - a very unusual thing to do. In another
parable one man owns three million dollars and he is to be
tried from this life only to go out and gain another man
who owes him a hundred dollars. The parable of the good
Samaritan is unusual in that the hated Samaritan (an alien
non) helped the man in need, while the priest and Levite
(men who would at least be expected to help a man of their
own religion and nationality) pass by on the other side.
The fact that the parables are so universal makes them easily
remembered.

DOWNWARD

This brings us to the fact that the application, once it is understood, can be related to many phases of life in our day or any other day. This is the reason why the parables are timeless. They are up-to-date in any age. The story may pass away, but the application of it will remain forever. This should be our real excuse for studying the parables, - to appropriate their value. The message of the parables should be constantly studied and applied.

We are not much concerned about the number of the parables. Why should we want to narrow the field only to those that qualify according to a rigid definition? Is there anything gained by rejecting the story of the good Samaritan because it doesn't come within the range of my definition. My definition ought to be broad enough even to include the story of the last judgment. Yet there should be reasonable limitations. The real value of the parable is in the application. The story is taken from the physical world; if it does not illustrate a definite spiritual principle, it has no value as a parable. This should be the only basis of limitation.

Finally, it is most important that we confine the parable to what Jesus meant it to teach. The pearl is not the Church at Geneva. The three measures of meal are not body, soul, and spirit; nor are they the three sons of Noah. If Jesus did not allegorise a parable, we have no right to do so either, unless we quite clearly say that we are fabricating an allegory. Through all the centuries the

parables have been obscured by allegorical interpretations.
Let us hope that their day is past.

persons have been convicted of illegal acts.

Let us hope that they are few.

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JESUS' USE OF THE PARABLE

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